

Heath's English Classics

COLERIDGE'S

PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM

CHAPTERS I., III., IV., XIV.-XXII.

OF

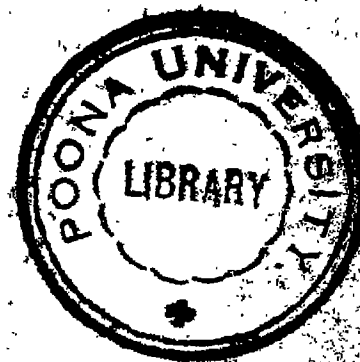
"BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA"

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

ANDREW J. GEORGE, M.A.

"The thirst to know and understand —
A large and liberal discontent:
These are the goods in life's rich hand,
The things that are more excellent."



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TO

PHILIP STAFFORD MOXOM

IN MEMORY OF PLEASANT ASSOCIATIONS

IN A QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD

OH! yet a few short years of useful life,
And all will be complete, thy race be run,
Thy monument of glory will be raised;
Then, though (too weak to tread the ways of truth)
This age fall back to old idolatry,
Though men return to servitude as fast
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
By nations sink together, we shall still
Find solace — knowing what we have learnt to know,
Rich in true happiness if allowed to be
Faithful alike in forwarding a day
Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work
(Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe)
Of their deliverance surely yet to come.
Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
(Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine.

WORDSWORTH TO COLERIDGE, PRELUDE XIV., 430-455.

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PREFACE.

THE contributions which Coleridge made to modern thought, rich, ample, and suggestive as they are, have all the characteristics of his varied and eventful life. In Poetry, Criticism, and Philosophy he drove the shaft deep and gave us samples of the wealth of ore lying in their confines. Although he worked these mines only at irregular intervals and passed rapidly from one to the other, yet, by stimulating and quickening activity in his associates and followers, he caused the entire territory to be explored, as it never was before in English history. If it cannot be said of him that he left us a rounded and complete system, yet it can be said — and it is a far nobler tribute — that he made it possible for us to grasp those principles which underlie all systems. His contribution to the literature of power is certainly unsurpassed by that of any writer of modern times. Mr. Arnold says: "That which will stand of Coleridge is this: the stimulus of his continual effort, crowned often with rich success, to get at and to lay bare the real truth of his matter in hand, whether that matter were literary, or philosophical, or political, or religious; and this in a country where at that moment such an effort was almost unknown. Coleridge's great usefulness lay in his supplying in England, for many years and under critical circumstances, by the spectacle of this effort of his, a stimulus to all minds

capable of profiting by it, in the generation which grew up around him.”¹

Coleridge was indeed, like Goethe, a valiant soldier in the “Liberation War of Humanity.” Any attempt to give an adequate reason for the character of his work would necessitate a thorough study of all the forces which worked upon and through him, — hereditary influences, environment, and that most baffling and mysterious of all powers, his own capacious soul. Nothing is more unsatisfactory than many of the attempts which have been made to pluck out the heart of his mystery. And one is often disposed to repeat to these unsympathetic monitors the warning of Tennyson :

“Dark-brow’d sophist, come not anear;
All the place is holy ground;
Hollow smile and frozen sneer
Come not here.”²

Or, again, that sympathetic and catholic stanza of Wordsworth to Burns’s critics :

“Enough of sorrow, wreck and blight;
Think rather of those moments bright
When to the consciousness of right
His course was true,
When wisdom prospered in his sight
And virtue grew.”³

Surely the man who could gather about him such choice spirits as Wordsworth, Scott, and Lamb ; Southey, Wilson, and De Quincey ; Byron, Hazlitt, and Sterling, had a nature too rich and royal, too suggestive and germinative, to be compassed by those —

¹ *Essays in Criticism*, p. 274.

² *The Poet’s Mind*.

³ *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland*.

“Who hate each other for a song
And do their little best to bite
And pinch their brethren in the throng
And scratch the very dead for spite.”¹

The surest road to a right position for judging Coleridge, is that by which we reach a right condition of mind—a sympathetic reading of his work in poetry, criticism, and philosophy. It is in this trinity of powers that we see the unity of soul which constitutes Coleridge's personality. To come into vital relations with the artist through the medium of his works; to become his friend, to whom he may reveal the secrets of his mind and heart; to become quickened by his spirit and receptive to his ideals, as the waters are to the sky's influence,—this is to gain the central motive of a great life, and is the end of all true literary interpretation. It is to furnish the means of access to the second of these departments of Coleridge's work that the following critical chapters from the *Biographia Literaria* are published.

It is natural and inevitable to associate Coleridge and Wordsworth together in this “Liberation War of Humanity.” The history of literature gives us no more interesting or suggestive picture than that of the friendship of these two men. A study of the means by which this love was fostered and sustained, and in consequence of which each attained heights from which is shed ever-enduring radiance, cannot fail to be rewarding. The fact that the main impulse to that poetry, and criticism, which has been the most stimulating and productive “in its application of ideas to life, in its natural magic and moral profundity,” was the creation of this friendship, is a sufficient

¹ Tennyson, *Literary Squabbles*.

reason for giving it prominence in this place. Beauty came to Coleridge in the garb of truth, while to Wordsworth truth came in the attire of beauty. Coleridge is the poetic philosopher, Wordsworth the philosophic poet.

Wordsworth was born and educated in the north country of Cumberland and Westmoreland. Having been nourished by "Presences of Nature in the sky and in the earth," and having communed with those "Visions of the hills and souls of lonely places" until his mind became peopled with forms sublime and fair, he entered Granta's Cloisters, there to be an inmate of a world within a world. He roamed

"Delighted through the motley spectacle :
Gowns, grave or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,
Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers;
Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,
A northern villager." ¹

From here his vacation visits to France brought him to feel something of the storm and stress, the tumult and passion of the Revolution.

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven."

His earliest poetry is an expression of his sympathy with the cause of humanity, and *Descriptive Sketches* reveal the first tidal impulse, moving him from the harbor life he had been living, out upon the turbulent sea of political and social controversy. On quitting the university he sought the companionship of that "dear sister" from whom he had been separated so long, and in 1795 they nestled, like two storm-tossed birds, in the Lodge

¹ *Prelude*, Book III., 30.

at Racedown in Dorsetshire, where we must now leave them to enjoy their life of love and loyalty.

Coleridge was born in the south country of Devonshire ; but owing to the death of his father he was sent to Christ's Hospital, London, at the age of nine. As a boy, Coleridge was exceedingly precocious ; he took no pleasure in boyish sports, but was an incessant reader of books of the imagination, and an eager listener to fairy stories. What a contrast to the boy Wordsworth, as he roamed the fields, rowed upon the lake, or harried the ravens' nests, in that fair seed-time of his soul ! At Christ's Hospital the life of Coleridge was by no means monotonous. With his study of the classics, and his love adventures ; his reading of the Neo-Platonists, and his floggings by Bowyer, this prodigy attracted his fellows, and won the admiration of Lamb and Middleton. Alluding to the marvellous power which Coleridge exercised at that early age, Lamb, a quarter of a century later, writes : " Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee — the dark pillar not yet turned — Samuel Taylor Coleridge — Logician, Metaphysician, Bard ! — How have I seen the casual passer through the cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration, to hear thee in thy deep and sweet intonations recite Homer in his Greek, or Pindar, while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired Charity boy* ! " ¹ Yet the heart of Coleridge was never weaned from his first love — the country. In speaking of this long exile he says :

" I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw naught lovely but the sky and stars."

¹ *Christ's Hospital Five and Twenty Years Ago.*

Wordsworth, in the *Prelude*, alludes to this homesickness of Coleridge :

“ Of rivers, fields,
And groves I speak to thee, my Friend! to thee
Who yet a liveried school boy, in the depths
Of the huge city, on the leaded roof
Of that wide edifice, thy school and home,
Wert used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
Moving in heaven ; or, of that pleasure tired,
To shut thine eyes, and by internal light
See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream,
Far distant.”¹

The event which, strange to say, had the greatest influence upon Coleridge at this time, was the chance reading of Bowles's Sonnets ; these had been sent to him by his friend Middleton, who had entered Cambridge a year before. In this slight volume of twenty sonnets, he met “ nature, unsophisticated by classic tradition,” and was captivated by their freshness, originality, and simplicity. He copied them again and again in order that his friends might enjoy them with him. In writing of these to one of his friends he says, “ They have done my heart more good than all the other books I ever read excepting the Bible.”² It is difficult for us in these days to conceive of a time when such influences could be produced by a little quarto. But Coleridge was not the only one over whom it cast its spell, for Wordsworth, as Mr. Campbell tells us, was not long after captivated by it. He first met the volume as he was starting for a walk, and kept his brother waiting on Westminster Bridge until he read the twenty sonnets. We may call these incidents

¹ Book VI., 264-273.

² J. Dykes Campbell, *Coleridge*, p. 18.

and their results chance if we please, but it were better to say with Spenser —

“It chanced —
Eternal God that chance did guide.”

Professor Drummond says we must judge the beginning of evolution by the results, not the results by the beginning; and is not the same method to be used in studying the lives of great poets?

Coleridge went to Cambridge two years after Wordsworth had taken his degree. As was to be expected, he entered more completely into the life of a scholar than did Wordsworth; he captured at least one prize, and was entered as competitor in several other contests. One of the important events in his university career was his meeting Wordsworth's *Descriptive Sketches*, and the consequent revelation of his instinctive critical faculty when he immediately asserted that they heralded the advent of a new star in the literary firmament; the other was his visit to Oxford and the meeting with Southey, when the Pantisocracy was hatched. On leaving Cambridge he settled at Bristol together with Southey, and planned Pantisocracy, and marriage; the former failed, the latter succeeded, and trouble began. The circle was now enlarged by the friendship of Lovell, Cottle, and Thomas Poole. The first edition of poems was published, and the *Watchman* was planned. He now moved into the little cottage, at Nether Stowey, the grounds of which joined those of Poole. This cottage is marked by a tablet on which is inscribed, “Here Samuel Taylor Coleridge made his home — 1797–1800.”

The Wordsworths had been living at Racedown, about thirty miles away, now for two years, and happy years they were, full

of radiant enjoyment. They were separated from the world, but they had communion with each other and with nature. "With this, in their innocent frugality and courage, they faced the world like a new pair of babes in the wood." Coleridge, on hearing that the author of *Descriptive Sketches* was so near, took an early opportunity of visiting him. Dorothy tells us "the first thing that was read on that occasion was 'The Ruined Cottage' with which Coleridge was so much delighted; and after tea he repeated to us two acts and a half of his tragedy 'Osorio.' The next morning William read his tragedy 'The Borderers.'"

That this was a clear case of love at first sight is shown by the letters written to their friends at this time. Dorothy writes: "You had a great loss in not seeing Coleridge. He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. . . . He has more of 'the poet's eye in fine frenzy rolling' than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows and an overhanging forehead."¹ Coleridge in his account of this visit says, "I speak with heartfelt sincerity, and, I think, unblinded judgment, when I tell you that I feel myself a little man by his side."² When the Wordsworths returned this visit and went to Nether Stowey, Coleridge gives this beautiful picture of Dorothy: "W. and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman indeed! in mind and heart; for her person is such that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her rather ordinary; if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty! but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion her most innocent soul outbeams so brightly, that who saw would say

¹ *Memoirs of Wordsworth*, VI., 99.

² Cottle, *Reminiscences*, I., 250.

‘Guilt was a thing impossible to her.’

Her information various. Her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature; and her taste a perfect electrometer.”¹ Wordsworth wrote, “Coleridge is the most *wonderful* man I ever met.” We are not surprised after reading these expressions of admiration that a month later the Wordsworths removed to Alfoxden near Nether Stowey, Somersetshire, where Coleridge resided.

The poets rambled over the Quantock Hills and held high communion. During one of these excursions, feeling the need of money, they planned a joint production for the *New Monthly Magazine*. They set about the work in earnest, and selected as a subject the “Ancyent Marinere,” founded upon a dream of one of Coleridge’s friends. Coleridge supplied most of the incidents and almost all the lines. Wordsworth contributed the incident of the killing of the albatross and a few of the lines. They soon found that their methods did not harmonize and the “Marinere” was left to Coleridge, while Wordsworth wrote upon the common incidents of everyday life. When the “Marinere” was finished Wordsworth had so many pieces ready that they concluded to publish a joint volume, and this they did under the title *Lyrical Ballads*, with the “Rime of the Ancyent Marinere” heading the volume. Cottle, the publisher, gave Wordsworth £30 for his poems, and made a separate bargain with Coleridge for the “Rime of the Ancyent Marinere,” “The Nightingale,” “The Foster Mother’s Tale,” and “The Dungeon.”

This was the *annus mirabilis* in the poetic career of Coleridge. “His hand, already on the latch, now opened the magic casements on the perilous seas sailed by the ‘Ancyent Mari-

¹ Cottle, *Reminiscences*, p. 144.

nere,' and the fairylands of 'Christabel' and 'Kubla Khan.'"¹

With the proceeds from the *Lyrical Ballads* in their pockets they concluded to visit Germany, and in September, 1798, they went to Hamburg, where they met Klopstock, the "German Milton." At Hamburg, Coleridge left the Wordsworths and went to Göttingen, plunged into metaphysics, and the world got no more "Ancyent Mariners." Wordsworth and his sister wintered in Goslar, an old imperial town in Hanover. In the spring of 1799 they returned to England and took up their abode at Sockburn with the Hutchinsons. Coleridge reached Stowey in July of the same year, and in October, in company with Cottle, visited the Wordsworths. It was at this time that they made the tour of the Lake Country and became attracted to the cottage at Town End, Grasmere, bearing the sign of the "Dove and Olive Bough," which Wordsworth leased; when he and his sister began housekeeping there in December, Coleridge went to London and began writing for the *Morning Post*; here his wife and son Hartley joined him. In February, 1800, he left the *Post* and went to work on his translation of *Wallenstein*. He visited Lamb at Pentonville, and Mrs. Coleridge with Hartley returned to Bristol. Of this visit Lamb wrote: "I am living in a continual feast. Coleridge has been with me now for nigh three weeks."² Having completed his translation, he took his family to visit the Wordsworths at Dove Cottage. After a month's sojourn here they settled at Greta Hall, Keswick, where Southey and his wife, a sister of Mrs. Coleridge, lived. Thus the last year of the century finds the two poets within a short distance of each other. That they fre-

¹ J. Dykes Campbell, *Coleridge*, p. 71.

² *Letters*, I., 113 and 115.

quently met at Dove Cottage, Greta Hall, and the little hamlet Wythburn on Lake Thirlmere, is certain from Wordsworth's poetry and Dorothy's *Journal*. An interesting memorial in the form of a mural stone marks their trysting-place at the head of Thirlmere. Upon it are the initials of the friends who held high converse there.

Of this Wordsworth wrote : —

“ We worked until the Initials took
 Shapes that defied a scornful look.”

 And fail not thou, loved Rock ! to keep
 Thy charge when we are laid asleep.”

Canon Rawnsley, writing from Keswick, 1894, says of the Coleridge of this time : “ To-day in Keswick the Coleridge of those past days is Coleridge still. He has the fire of a soldier, the fervor of a preacher, and the singleness of heart that holds that ‘ name, wealth, and fame seem cheap to him beside the interests of what he believes to be the truth and will of his Maker.’ ”¹

Soon, however, the clouds began to gather, and the storm broke upon him ; before its fierce and pitiless blasts he was driven like his own Marinere, —

“ Alone, alone, all, all alone,
 Alone on a wide, wide sea.”

Ill health, domestic discord, and the “ Kendal Black Drop ”

“ Did like a tempest strong
 Come to him thus, and drove the weary wight along.”

¹ *The English Lakes*, Vol. I., 21.

From this time until he finds a haven with the Gillmans at Highgate, his life is one long struggle against wind and wave, relieved now and then by a gleam of sunlight in the presence of faithful and devoted friends.

Perhaps the most pathetic scene in all these years is that evening at Coleorton, January, 1807, when visiting the Wordsworths, who had gone hither for the winter at the invitation of Sir George Beaumont, he listened to the reading of the *Prelude*, dedicated to himself, and after the "long-sustained song finally closed," he wrote that tender and beautiful poem, beginning—

"O Friend! O Teacher! God's great gift to me!

Into my heart have I received that lay

More than historic, that prophetic lay

Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)

Of the foundations and the building up

Of thy own Spirit thou hast loved to tell

What *may* be told, by words revealable.

O Friend, too well thou know'st, of what sad years

The long suppression has benumb'd my soul,

That, even as life returns upon the drown'd,

The unusual joy awoke a throng of pains—

Keen pangs of Love, awakening, as a babe

Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart!

Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain;

An opinion given, and knowledge won in vain;

And all, which I had cull'd in wood-walks wild,

And all which patient toil had rear'd, and all

Commune with thee had open'd out—but flowers

Strew'd on my corse, and borne upon my bier,

In the same coffin, for the self-same grave."

From this time until 1816, when he places himself under the care of Dr. Gillman, he stems the tide with what strength he

has, and diverts himself with his *Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton* and his *Biographia Literaria*. "From his ninth year he had been a wanderer and a sojourner, finding no city to dwell in, and now when he was at his wit's end, tossed in a sea of troubles, the waves suddenly stilled, and he felt that he had reached his desired haven."¹

The picture which Carlyle gives of Coleridge at Highgate is exceedingly graphic: "Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate Hill, in those years, looking down on London and its smoke-tumult, like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle; attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there. . . . He had, especially among young inquiring men, a higher than literary, a kind of prophetic or magician character. . . . No talk in his century, or in any other, could be more inspiring."²

What Matthew Arnold says of Joubert³ can be fittingly said of Coleridge: "He lived in the Philistines' day, in a place and time when almost every idea current in literature had the mark of Dagon upon it, and not the mark of the children of light. Nay, the children of light were as yet hardly so much as heard of: the Canaanite was then in the land. Still, there were even then a few, who, nourished on some secret tradition, or illumined, perhaps, by divine inspiration, kept aloof from the reigning superstitions, never bowed the knee to the gods of Canaan; and one of these few was called *Joubert*."

"A brief dawn of unsurpassed promise and achievement: 'a trouble' as of 'clouds and weeping rain'; then, a long summer evening's work done by 'the setting sun's pathetic

¹ J. Dykes Campbell, *Coleridge*, p. 220.

² *Life of Sterling*.

³ *Essays in Criticism*, p. 305.

light' — such was Coleridge's day, the after-glow of which is still in the sky. I am sure that the temple, with all the rubble which blended with its marble, must have been a grander whole than any we are able to reconstruct for ourselves from the stones that lie about the field. The living Coleridge was ever his own apology — men and women who neither shared nor ignored his shortcomings, not only loved him, but honored and followed him. Hatred as well as love may be blind, but friendship has eyes, and their testimony may wisely be used in correcting our own impressions."¹

We cannot more fittingly close this review of Coleridge than by quoting the touching words of Cardinal Newman, who saw in Coleridge's works a proof that the mind of England was no longer satisfied with the husks of the last century, and who himself had, in the midst of the storm and tumult of his own time, prayed that some "kindly light" would lead him: —

"After trial and temptation; after sorrow and pain; after daily dyings to the world; after daily risings into holiness; at length comes that 'rest that remaineth unto the people of God.' After the fever of life; after wearinesses and sicknesses; fightings and despondings; struggling and failing, struggling and succeeding; after all the changes and chances of this troubled and unhealthy state, at length comes death, at length the White Throne of God, at length the Beatific Vision."² Coleridge died July 25, 1834, and was buried in Highgate churchyard.

No attempt is made in this work to reopen the celebrated case of *Coleridge vs. Wordsworth*. A fair trial has been granted; the arguments of the counsel have been full of force and brilliancy; the verdict has been rendered and the jury dismissed.

¹ J. Dykes Campbell, *Coleridge*, p. 282.

² *Parochial Sermons*.

To move for a new trial on exceptions would be but folly. The rulings in this case have become precedents in all literary courts at law. It has been the editor's pleasant duty to emphasize some of the facts which gave rise to the case; to review the significant points in evidence, and to set forth some of the opinions of able counsel not directly concerned in the trial. Inasmuch as the "able counsel" include those in the admirable little volume, *The Prelude to Poetry*, edited by Mr. Ernest Rhys, which comes to me as this goes to press, I will quote the closing lines of his introduction as revealing the purpose of that book: "To set up the eternal standards by which alone English poetry can hope to sustain the great traditions of Spenser and Milton, Keats and Wordsworth, and other masters of its House of Fame." May this little work contribute to the same end.

The biographical chapters introductory to those in Criticism have been retained, because they present such material as is necessary to a complete revelation of the furnishing of Coleridge's mind and the forming of his art. They reveal to us the secret springs of influence whence flowed so much that was stimulating and refreshing. A thorough study of this work and of Wordsworth's *Prefaces* will enable one to gain a clear conception of that friendly controversy in poetics, and will bring one into touch with those principles of criticism which are the foundation of literary interpretation.

The references to the *Prefaces* of Wordsworth are to the edition published by D. C. Heath & Co., it being the only edition having the lines numbered, — the only edition other than that in the three volumes of the poet's prose works.

INTRODUCTION.

THE twin contemplative seers, Wordsworth and Coleridge, lift their torches, dispersing many mists. They saw that poetry is not opposed to prose, of which verse is the true antithesis, but that in spirit and action it is the reverse of science or matter of fact. Imagination is its pole-star, its utterance the echo of man and nature.

E. C. STEDMAN.

Coleridge was almost unique in his criticism as in his poetry : first, because his criticism (so far as it was really excellent) was the criticism of love, the criticism of a man who combined the first simple impulse of admiration with the power of explaining why he admired ; and secondly, and as a result, because he placed himself at the right point of view ; because, to put it briefly, he was the first great writer who criticised poetry as poetry, and not as science.

LESLIE STEPHEN.

Coleridge's criticism, his challenge for recognition, in the concrete, visible, finite work of art, of the dim, unseen, comparatively infinite soul or power of the artist, may well be remembered as a part of the long pleading of German culture for the things "behind the veil."

WALTER PATER.

The main value of the *Biographia Literaria* is to be found in the contents of seven chapters, from the fourteenth to the twentieth ; but it is not going too far to say that, in respect of these, it is literally priceless. No such analysis of the principles of poetry—no such exact discrimination of what was sound in the modern “return to nature” movement from what was false—has ever been accomplished by any other critic.

H. D. TRAILL.

If a man wished to learn what genuine criticism should be, where else in our country’s literature would he find so worthy a model as in that dissertation on Wordsworth? There is more to be learned about poetry from a few pages of that dissertation, confined though it be to a specific kind of poetry, than from all the reviews that have been written in English on poets and their works from Addison to the present hour.

J. C. SHAIRP.

In criticism Coleridge was, indeed, a teacher and interpreter whose service was incalculable. As he was the first to observe some of the sky’s appearances and some of the shyer revelations of outward nature, so he was also first in writing some of the more occult phenomena of thought and emotion. Many of his hints and suggestions are more pregnant than whole treatises.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

The *Biographia Literaria* is a thing of great price ; when it touches the principles of poetic composition it is hardly less than priceless.

HALL CAINE.

Coleridge was the first who made criticism interpretative both of the spirit and the form of works of genius, the first who

founded his principles in the nature of things. He had a clear notion of the difference lying at the base of all poetic criticism, between *mechanical regularity* and *organic form*.

E. P. WHIPPLE.

That which will stand of Coleridge is this: the stimulus of his continual instinctive effort to get at and to lay bare the real truth of his matter in hand, whether that matter were literary or philosophical, or political or religious; and this in a country when at that moment such an effort was almost unknown.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

If all cultivated men speak differently because of the existence of Wordsworth and Coleridge; if not a thoughtful English book has appeared for forty years, without some trace of their influence; this is because they possessed the inner nature — “an intense and glowing mind, the vision and the faculty divine.”

WALTER BAGEHOT.

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COLERIDGE'S
PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM
FROM
BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA.

CHAPTER I.

The motives of the present work — Reception of the author's first publication — The discipline of his taste at school — The effect of contemporary writers on youthful minds — Bowles's Sonnets — Comparison between the poets before and since Pope.

It has been my lot to have had my name introduced, both in conversation and in print, more frequently than I find it easy to explain, whether I consider the fewness, unimportance, and limited circulation of my writings, or the retirement and distance in which I have lived, both from 5 the literary and political world. Most often it has been connected with some charge which I could not acknowledge, or some principle which I had never entertained. Nevertheless, had I had no other motive or incitement, the reader would not have been troubled with this exculpation. What 10 my additional purposes were will be seen in the following pages. It will be found that the least of what I have written concerns myself personally. I have used the narration chiefly for the purpose of giving a continuity to the work, in

part for the sake of the miscellaneous reflections suggested to me by particular events ; but still more as introductory to the statement of my principles in Politics, Religion and Philosophy, and the application of the rules, deduced from philosophical principles, to poetry and criticism. But of the objects which I proposed to myself, it was not the least important to effect, as far as possible, a settlement of the long-continued controversy concerning the true nature of poetic diction, and at the same time to define with the utmost impartiality the real poetic character of the poet, by whose writings this controversy was first kindled, and has been since fuelled and fanned.

In 1794, when I had barely passed the verge of manhood, I published a small volume of juvenile poems.¹ They were received with a degree of favour which, young as I was, I well knew was bestowed on them not so much for any positive merit, as because they were considered buds of hope and promises of better works to come. The critics of that day, the most flattering equally with the severest, concurred in objecting to them obscurity, a general turgidness of diction, and a profusion of new-coined double epithets.² The first is the fault which a writer is the least able to detect in his own compositions ; and my mind was not then sufficiently disciplined to receive the authority of others as a substitute for my own conviction. Satisfied that the thoughts, such as they were, could not have been expressed otherwise, or at least more perspicuously, I forgot to inquire whether the thoughts themselves did not demand a degree of attention unsuitable to the nature and objects of poetry. This remark, however, applies chiefly, though not exclusively, to the *Religious Musings*.³ The remainder of the charge I ad-

mitted to its full extent, and not without sincere acknowledgments to both my private and public censors for their friendly admonitions. In the after editions I pruned the double epithets with no sparing hand, and used my best efforts to tame the swell and glitter both of thought and dic- 5
tion; though, in truth, these parasite plants of youthful poetry had insinuated themselves into my longer poems with such intricacy of union, that I was often obliged to omit disentangling the weed, from the fear of snapping the flower.¹ From that period to the date of the present work I have 10
published nothing with my name which could by any possibility have come before the board of anonymous criticism. Even the three or four poems, printed with the works of a friend, as far as they were censured at all, were charged with the same or similar defects, though I am persuaded, 15
not with equal justice; with an excess of ornament, in addition to strained and elaborate diction.² May I be permitted to add, that, even at the early period of my juvenile poems, I saw and admitted the superiority of an austerer and more natural style, with an insight not less clear than I at present 20
possess. My judgment was stronger than were my powers of realizing its dictates, and the faults of my language, though indeed partly owing to a wrong choice of subjects, and the desire of giving a poetic colouring to abstract and metaphysical truths, in which a new world then seemed to open 25
upon me, did yet, in part likewise, originate in unfeigned diffidence of my own comparative talent. During several years of my youth and early manhood, I revered those who had reintroduced the manly simplicity of the Grecian, and of our own elder poets, with such enthusiasm, as made 30
the hope seem presumptuous of writing successfully in the

same style. Perhaps a similar process has happened to others ; but my earliest poems were marked by an ease and simplicity, which I have studied, perhaps with inferior success, to impress on my later compositions.¹

5 At school I enjoyed the inestimable advantage of a very sensible, though at the same time, a very severe master.² He early moulded my taste to the preference of Demosthenes to Cicero, of Homer and Theocritus to Virgil, and again of Virgil to Ovid. He habituated me to compare
10 Lucretius (in such extracts as I then read), Terence, and, above all, the chaster poems of Catullus, not only with the Roman poets of the so-called silver and brazen ages, but with even those of the Augustan era ; and, on grounds of plain sense and universal logic, to see and assert the superi-
15 ority of the former, in the truth and nativeness both of their thoughts and diction. At the same time that we were studying the Greek Tragic Poets, he made us read Shakespeare and Milton as lessons ; and they were the lessons, too, which required most time and trouble to *bring up*, so as to es-
20 cape his censure. I learnt from him that poetry, even that of the loftiest, and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own as severe as that of science, and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more and more fugitive causes. In the truly great poets,
25 he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word ; and I well remember that, availing himself of the synonymes to the Homer of Didymus, he made us attempt to show, with regard to each, why it would not have answered the same purpose, and
30 wherein consisted the peculiar fitness of the word in the original text.

In our own English compositions (at least for the last three years of our school education) he showed no mercy to phrase, metaphor, or image, unsupported by a sound sense, or where the same sense might have been conveyed with equal force and dignity in plainer words. Lute, harp, 5 and lyre, muse, muses, and inspirations, Pegasus, Parnassus, and Hippocrene, were all an abomination to him. In fancy I can almost hear him now, exclaiming, "*Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, muse? Your Nurse's daughter you mean! Pierian spring? Oh,* 10 *aye! the cloister pump, I suppose!*" Nay, certain introductions, similes, and examples were placed by name on a list of interdiction. Among the similes there was, I remember, that of the manchineel fruit, as suiting equally well with too many subjects, in which, however, it yielded the palm at 15 once to the example of Alexander and Clytus, which was equally good and apt whatever might be the theme. Was it ambition? Alexander and Clytus! Flattery? Alexander and Clytus! Anger? Drunkenness? Pride? Friendship? Ingratitude? Late repentance? Still, still Alexander and Clytus! 20 At length the praises of agriculture having been exemplified in the sagacious observation, that, had Alexander been holding the plough, he would not have run his friend Clytus through with a spear; this tried and serviceable old friend was banished by public edict in *sæcula sæculorum*.¹ I have 25 sometimes ventured to think that a list of this kind, or an *index expurgatorius*² of certain well-known and ever-returning phrases, both introductory and transitional, including the large assortment of modest egotisms and flattering illeisms, &c., &c., might be hung up in our law courts and 30 both Houses of Parliament, with great advantage to the

public as an important saving of national time, an incalculable relief to his Majesty's ministers ; but, above all, as insuring the thanks of country attorneys and their clients, who have private bills to carry through the House.

5 Be this as it may, there was one custom of our master's, which I cannot pass over in silence, because I think it imitable and worthy of imitation. He would often permit our theme exercises, under some pretext of want of time, to accumulate, till each lad had four or five to be looked over.

10 Then placing the whole number *abreast* on his desk, he would ask the writer why this or that sentence might not have found as appropriate a place under this or that other thesis ; and if no satisfying answer could be returned, and two faults of the same kind were found in one exercise, the

15 irrevocable verdict followed, the exercise was torn up, and another on the same subject to be produced, in addition to the tasks of the day. The reader will, I trust, excuse this tribute of recollection to a man, whose severities, even now, not seldom furnish the dreams by which the blind fancy

20 would fain interpret to the mind the painful sensations of distempered sleep ; but neither lessen nor dim the deep sense of my moral and intellectual obligations. He sent us to the University excellent Latin and Greek scholars, and tolerable Hebraists. Yet our classical knowledge was the

25 least of the good gifts which we derived from his zealous and conscientious tutorage. He is now gone to his final reward, full of years and full of honours, even of those honours which were dearest to his heart, as gratefully bestowed by that school, and still binding him to the interests

30 of that school in which he had been himself educated, and to which during his whole life he was a dedicated thing.

From causes which this is not the place to investigate, no models of past times, however perfect, can have the same vivid effect on the youthful mind, as the productions of contemporary genius. The discipline my mind had undergone “*Ne falleretur rotundo sono et versuum cursu, cincinnis et 5 floribus; sed ut inspiceret quidnam subesset, quæ sedes, quod firmamentum, quis fundus verbis; an figuræ essent mera ornatura et orationis fucus: vel sanguinis e materiæ ipsius corde effluentis rubor quidam natus et incalescentia genuina;*”¹ removed all obstacles to the appreciation of excel- 10 lence in style without diminishing my delight. That I was thus prepared for the perusal of Mr. Bowles’s sonnets and earlier poems, at once increased *their* influence and *my* enthusiasm. The great works of past ages seem to a young man things of another race, in respect to which his faculties 15 must remain passive and submiss, even as to the stars and mountains. But the writings of a contemporary, perhaps not many years older than himself, surrounded by the same circumstances, and disciplined by the same manners, possess a reality for him, and inspire an actual friendship as of a man 20 for a man. His very admiration is the wind which fans and feeds his hope. The poems themselves assume the properties of flesh and blood. To recite, to extol, to contend for them is but the payment of a debt due to one, who exists to receive it. 25

There are indeed modes of teaching which have produced, and are producing, youths of a very different stamp; modes of teaching, in comparison with which we have been called on to despise our great public schools, and universities,

“in whose halls are hung
Armoury of the invincible knights of old” —

modes, by which children are to be metamorphosed into prodigies. And prodigies with a vengeance have I known thus produced. Prodigies of self-conceit, shallowness, arrogance, and infidelity ! Instead of storing the memory during
 5 the period when the memory is the predominant faculty, with facts for the after exercise of the judgment ; and instead of awakening by the noblest models the fond and unmixed love and admiration which is the natural and graceful temper of early youth, these nurslings of improved pedagogy are taught
 10 to dispute and decide ; to suspect all, but their own and their lecturer's wisdom ; and to hold nothing sacred from their contempt but their own contemptible arrogance : boy-graduates in all the technicals, and in all the dirty passions and impudence, of anonymous criticism.¹ To such dispositions alone can the admonition of Pliny be requisite, "*Neque enim debet operibus ejus obesse, quod vivit. An si inter eos, quos nunquam vidimus, floruisse, non solum libros ejus, verum etiam imagines conquireremus, ejusdem nunc honor præsentis, et gratia quasi satietate languescet? At hoc*
 15 *pravum, malignumque est, non admirari hominem admiratione dignissimum, quia videre, complecti, nec laudare tantum verum etiam amare contingit.*"²

I had just entered on my seventeenth year, when the sonnets of Mr. Bowles,³ twenty in number, and just then
 25 published in a quarto pamphlet, were first made known and presented to me by a schoolfellow, who had quitted us for the University, and who, during the whole time that he was in our first form (or in our school language a Grecian), had been my patron and protector. I refer to Dr. Middleton,
 30 the truly learned, and every way excellent Bishop of Calcutta :

“ *Qui laudibus amplis*
Ingenium celebrare meum, calammumque solebat,
Calcar agens animo validum. Non omnia terræ
Obruta ! Vivit amor, vivit dolor ! Ora negatur
*Dulcia conspiciere ; at flere et meminisse relictum est.”*¹

5

It was a double pleasure to me, and still remains a tender recollection, that I should have received from a friend so revered the first knowledge of a poet, by whose works, year after year, I was so enthusiastically delighted and inspired. My earliest acquaintances will not have forgotten the undisciplined eagerness and impetuous zeal with which I laboured 10 to make proselytes, not only of my companions, but of all with whom I conversed, of whatever rank, and in whatever place. As my school finances did not permit me to purchase copies, I made, within less than a year and a half, more than forty transcriptions, as the best presents I could 15 offer to those who had in any way won my regard. And with almost equal delight did I receive the three or four following publications of the same author.

Though I have seen and known enough of mankind to be well aware that I shall perhaps stand alone in my creed, and 20 that it will be well if I subject myself to no worse charge than that of singularity ; I am not, therefore, deterred from avowing that I regard, and ever have regarded the obligations of intellect among the most sacred of the claims of gratitude. A valuable thought, or a particular train of 25 thoughts, gives me additional pleasure when I can safely refer and attribute it to the conversation or correspondence of another. My obligations to Mr. Bowles were indeed important, and for radical good. At a very premature age, even before my fifteenth year, I had bewildered myself in 30

metaphysics, and in theological controversy. Nothing else pleased me. History, and particular facts, lost all interest in my mind. Poetry (though for a schoolboy of that age I was above par in English versification, and had already produced two or three compositions which, I may venture to say, without reference to my age, were somewhat above mediocrity, and which had gained me more credit than the sound good sense of my old master was at all pleased with), poetry itself, yea novels and romances, became insipid to me. In my friendless wanderings on our leave-days¹ (for I was an orphan, and had scarce any connections in London), highly was I delighted if any passenger, especially if he were dressed in black, would enter into conversation with me. For I soon found the means of directing it to my favourite subjects

“Of providence, fore-knowledge, will, and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, fore-knowledge absolute,
And found no end in wandering mazes lost.”²

This preposterous pursuit was, beyond doubt, injurious, both to my natural powers, and to the progress of my education. It would, perhaps, have been destructive had it been continued; but from this I was auspiciously withdrawn, partly, indeed, by an accidental introduction to an amiable family,³ chiefly, however, by the genial influence of a style of poetry, so tender and yet so manly, so natural and real, and yet so dignified and harmonious, as the sonnets, &c., of Mr. Bowles! Well were it for me, perhaps, had I never relapsed into the same mental disease; if I had continued to pluck the flower and reap the harvest from the cultivated surface, instead of delving in the unwholesome quicksilver

mines of metaphysic depths. But if in after time I have sought a refuge from bodily pain and mismanaged sensibility in abstruse researches, which exercised the strength and subtlety of the understanding without awakening the feelings of the heart, still there was a long and blessed interval, during which my natural faculties were allowed to expand, and my original tendencies to develop themselves; my fancy, and the love of nature, and the sense of beauty in forms and sounds.¹

The second advantage, which I owe to my early perusal and admiration of these poems (to which, let me add, though known to me at a somewhat later period, the *Lewesdon Hill* of Mr. Crowe), bears more immediately on my present subject. Among those with whom I conversed, there were, of course, very many who had formed their taste and their notions of poetry from the writings of Pope and his followers; or, to speak more generally, in that school of French poetry, condensed and invigorated by English understanding, which had predominated from the last century. I was not blind to the merits of this school; yet, as from inexperience of the world, and consequent want of sympathy with the general subjects of these poems, they gave me little pleasure, I doubtless undervalued the kind, and, with the presumption of youth, withheld from its masters the legitimate name of poets. I saw that the excellence of this kind consisted in just and acute observations on men and manners in an artificial state of society, as its matter and substance; and, in the logic of wit, conveyed in smooth and strong epigrammatic couplets as its form. Even when the subject was addressed to the fancy or the intellect, as in the *Rape of the Lock*, or the *Essay on Man*; nay, when it was

a consecutive narration, as in that astonishing product of matchless talent and ingenuity, Pope's *Translation of the Iliad*; still a point was looked for at the end of each second line, and the whole was as it were a sorites, or, if I may exchange a logical for a grammatical metaphor, a conjunction disjunctive of epigrams. . Meantime the matter and diction seemed to me characterized not so much by poetic thoughts, as by thoughts translated into the language of poetry. On this last point I had occasion to render my own thoughts
 10 gradually more and more plain to myself by frequent amicable disputes concerning Darwin's *Botanic Garden*, which for some years was greatly extolled, not only by the reading public in general, but even by those whose genius and natural robustness of understanding enabled them afterwards to
 15 act foremost in dissipating these "painted mists" that occasionally rise from the marshes at the foot of Parnassus. During my first Cambridge vacation I assisted a friend in a contribution for a literary society in Devonshire, and in this I remember to have compared Darwin's work to the Russian
 20 palace of ice, glittering, cold, and transitory. In the same essay, too, I assigned sundry reasons, chiefly drawn from a comparison of passages in the Latin poets with the original Greek from which they were borrowed, for the preference of Collins's odes to those of Gray, and of the simile of
 25 Shakespeare :

"How like a younker or a prodigal,
 The scarfed bark puts from her native bay
 Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind!
 How like the prodigal doth she return,
 30 With over-weather'd ribs and ragged sails,
 Lean, rent and beggar'd by the strumpet wind!"¹

to the imitation in the *Bard*:

“Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows
 While proudly riding o’er the azure realm
 In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
 YOUTH at the prow and PLEASURE at the helm, 5
 Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind’s sway,
 That hush’d in grim repose, expects its evening prey.”¹

(In which, by-the-by, the words “realm” and “sway” are rhymes dearly purchased.) I preferred the original on the ground that, in the imitation, it depended wholly in the com- 10
 positor’s putting, or not putting, a small capital both in this and in many other passages of the same poet, whether the words should be personifications or mere abstracts. I mention this because, in referring various lines in Gray to their original in Shakespeare and Milton—and in the clear per- 15
 ception how completely all the propriety was lost in the transfer—I was, at that early period, led to a conjecture which, many years afterwards, was recalled to me from the same thought having been started in conversation, but far more ably, and developed more fully, by Mr. Wordsworth,² 20
 namely, that this style of poetry, which I have characterized above as translations of prose thoughts into poetic language, had been kept up by, if it did not wholly arise from, the custom of writing Latin verses, and the great importance attached to these exercises in our public schools. What- 25
 ever might have been the case in the fifteenth century, when the use of the Latin tongue was so general among learned men, that Erasmus is said to have forgotten his native language; yet in the present day it is not to be supposed that a youth can think in Latin, or that he can have any other 30
 reliance on the force or fitness of his phrases but the authority

of the author from whence he has adopted them. Consequently he must first prepare his thoughts, and then pick out from Virgil, Horace, Ovid, or perhaps more compendiously, from his *Gradus*,¹ halves and quarters of lines in which to
 5 embody them.

I never object to a certain degree of disputatiousness in a young man from the age of seventeen to that of four or five and twenty, provided I find him always arguing on one side of the question. The controversies, occasioned by my un-
 10 feigned zeal for the honour of a favourite contemporary, then known to me only by his works, were of great advantage in the formation and establishment of my taste and critical opinions. In my defence of the lines running into each other, instead of closing at each couplet; and of natural
 15 language, neither bookish nor vulgar, neither redolent of the lamp or of the kennel, such as *I will remember thee*; instead of the same thought tricked up in the rag-fair finery of

—— “Thy image on her wing
 Before my fancy’s eye shall memory bring,”

20 I had continually to adduce the metre and diction of the Greek poets from Homer to Theocritus inclusive; and still more of our elder English poets from Chaucer to Milton. Nor was this all. But as it was my constant reply to authorities brought against me from later poets of great name,
 25 that no authority could avail in opposition to truth, nature, logic, and the laws of universal grammar; actuated too by my former passion for metaphysical investigations, I laboured at a solid foundation, on which permanently to ground my opinions, in the component faculties of the human mind it-
 30 self, and their comparative dignity and importance. Accord-

ing to the faculty or source from which the pleasure given by any poem or passage was derived, I estimated the merit of such poem or passage. As the result of all my reading and meditation, I abstracted two critical aphorisms, deeming them to comprise the conditions and *criteria* of poetic style ; first, that not the poem which we have read, but that to which we return, with the greatest pleasure, possesses the genuine power and claims the name of essential poetry. Second, that whatever lines can be translated into other words of the same language, without diminution of their significance, either in sense or association, or in any worthy feeling, are so far vicious in their diction.¹ Be it, however, observed, that I excluded from the list of worthy feelings the pleasure derived from mere novelty in the reader, and the desire of exciting wonderment at his powers in the author. Oftentimes since then, in perusing French tragedies, I have fancied two marks of admiration at the end of each line, as hieroglyphics of the author's own admiration at his own cleverness. Our genuine admiration of a great poet is a continuous undercurrent of feeling ; it is everywhere present, but seldom anywhere as a separate excitement. I was wont boldly to affirm that it would be scarcely more difficult to push a stone out from the pyramids with the bare hand, than to alter a word, or the position of a word, in Milton or Shakespeare (in their most important works at least) without making the author say something else, or something worse, than he does say. One great distinction I appeared to myself to see plainly, between even the characteristic faults of our elder poets and the false beauties of the moderns. In the former, from Donne to Cowley, we find the most fantastic out-of-the-way thoughts,

but in the most pure and genuine mother English ; in the latter, the most obvious thoughts, in language the most fantastic and arbitrary. Our faulty elder poets sacrificed the passion, and passionate flow of poetry, to the subtleties of intellect and to the starts of wit ; the moderns to the glare and glitter of a perpetual yet broken and heterogeneous imagery, or rather to an amphibious something, made up, half of image and half of abstract meaning.¹ The one sacrificed the heart to the head, the other both heart and head to point and drapery.

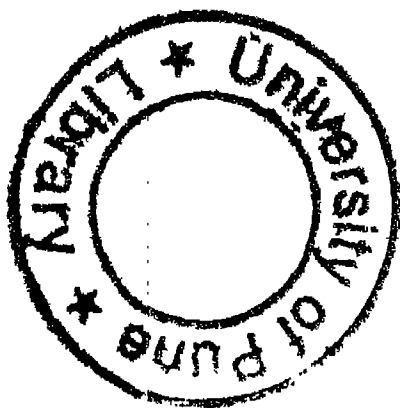
The reader must make himself acquainted with the general style of composition that was at that time deemed poetry, in order to understand and account for the effect produced on me by the *Sonnets*, the *Monody at Matlock*, and the *Hope*, of Mr. Bowles ; for it is peculiar to original genius to become less and less striking, in proportion to its success in improving the taste and judgment of its contemporaries. The poems of West, indeed, had the merit of chaste and manly diction, but they were cold, and, if I may so express it, only dead-coloured ; while in the best of War- ton's there is a stiffness, which too often gives them the appearance of imitations from the Greek. Whatever relation, therefore, of cause or impulse Percy's collection of *Ballads* may bear to the most popular poems of the present day, yet in the more sustained and elevated style of the then living poets Bowles and Cowper² were, to the best of my knowledge, the first who combined natural thoughts with natural diction ; the first who reconciled the heart with the head.³

It is true, as I have before mentioned, that from diffidence in my own powers, I for a short time adopted a laborious

and florid diction, which I myself deemed, if not absolutely vicious, yet of very inferior worth. Gradually, however, my practice conformed to my better judgment, and the compositions of my twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth years (for example, the shorter blank verse poems, the lines which are now adopted in the introductory part of the *Vision* in the present collection in Mr. Southey's *Joan of Arc*, 2nd book, 1st edition, and the *Tragedy of Remorse*) are not more below my present ideal in respect of the general tissue of the style than those of the latest date. Their faults were at least a remnant of the former leaven, and among the many who have done me the honour of putting my poems in the same class with those of my betters, the one or two who have pretended to bring examples of affected simplicity from my volume, have been able to adduce but one instance, and that out of a copy of verses half ludicrous, half splenetic, which I intended, and had myself characterized, as *sermoni propria*.

Every reform, however necessary, will by weak minds be carried to an excess, that itself will need reforming. The reader will excuse me for noticing that I myself was the first to expose *risu honesto* the three sins of poetry, one or the other of which is the most likely to beset a young writer. So long ago as the publication of the second number of the *Monthly Magazine*, under the name of Nehemiah Higginbottom I contributed three sonnets, the first of which had for its object to excite a good-natured laugh at the spirit of doleful egotism, and at the recurrence of favourite phrases, with the double defect of being at once trite and licentious. The second on low, creeping language and thoughts, under the pretence of simplicity. And the third, the phrases of

which were borrowed entirely from my own poems, on the indiscriminate use of elaborate and swelling language and imagery. The reader will find them in the notes,¹ and will I trust regard them as reprinted for biographical purposes, and not for their poetic merits. So general at that time, and so decided was the opinion concerning the characteristic vices of my style, that a celebrated physician (now, alas ! no more), speaking of me in other respects with his usual kindness to a gentleman who was about to
5 meet me at a dinner party, could not, however, resist giving him a hint not to mention the "*House that Jack built*" in my presence, for "that I was as sore as a boil about that sonnet," he not knowing that I was myself the author of it.
10



CHAPTER II.

The author's obligations to critics, and the probable occasion — Principles of modern criticism — Mr. Southey's works and character.

To anonymous critics in reviews, magazines, and newspapers of various name and rank, and to satirists with or without a name, in verse or prose, or in verse-text aided by prose-comment, I do seriously believe and profess, that I owe full two-thirds of whatever reputation and publicity I happen to possess.¹ For when the name of an individual has occurred so frequently, in so many works, for so great a length of time, the readers of these works (which with a shelf or two of *Beauties*, *Elegant Extracts*, and *Anas*, form nine-tenths of the reading of the reading public²) cannot but be familiar with the name, without distinctly remembering whether it was introduced for eulogy or for censure. And this becomes the more likely, if (as I believe) the habit of perusing periodical works may be properly added to Averroes's³ catalogue of *Anti-mnemonics*, or weakeners of the memory. But where this has not been the case, yet the reader will be apt to suspect that there must be something more than usually strong and extensive in a reputation, that could either require or stand so merciless and long-continued a cannonading. Without any feeling of anger therefore (for which, indeed, on my own account, I have no pretext) I may yet be allowed to express some degree of sur-

prise, that after having run the critical gauntlet for a certain class of faults which I had, nothing having come before the judgment-seat in the interim, I should, year after year, quarter after quarter, month after month (not to mention
5 sundry petty periodicals of still quicker revolution, "or weekly or diurnal") have been for at least seventeen years¹ consecutively, dragged forth by them into the foremost ranks of the proscribed, and forced to abide the brunt of abuse, for faults directly opposite, and which I certainly
10 had not. How shall I explain this?

Whatever may have been the case with others, I certainly cannot attribute this persecution to personal dislike, or to envy, or to feelings of vindictive animosity. Not to the former, for, with the exception of a very few who are my
15 intimate friends, and were so before they were known as authors, I have had little other acquaintance with literary characters, than what may be implied in an accidental introduction, or casual meeting in a mixed company. And, as far as words and looks can be trusted, I must believe that,
20 even in these instances, I had excited no unfriendly disposition.² Neither by letter, or in conversation, have I ever had dispute or controversy beyond the common social interchange of opinions. Nay, where I had reason to suppose my convictions fundamentally different, it has been my
25 habit, and I may add, the impulse of my nature, to assign the grounds of my belief, rather than the belief itself; and not to express dissent till I could establish some points of complete sympathy, some grounds common to both sides, from which to commence its explanation.³

30 Still less can I place these attacks to the charge of envy. The few pages which I have published are of too distant

a date, and the extent of their sale a proof too conclusive against their having been popular at any time, to render probable, I had almost said possible, the excitement of envy on their account; and the man who should envy me on any other, verily he must be envy-mad!

5

Lastly, with as little semblance of reason, could I suspect any animosity towards me from vindictive feelings as the cause. I have before said, that my acquaintance with literary men has been limited and distant, and that I have had neither dispute nor controversy. From my first entrance 10 into life, I have, with few and short intervals, lived either abroad or in retirement. My different essays on subjects of national interest, published at different times, first in the *Morning Post* and then in the *Courier*, with my courses of lectures on the *Principles of Criticism* as applied to Shake- 15 speare and Milton, constitute my whole publicity; ¹ the only occasion on which I could offend any member of the republic of letters. With one solitary exception, in which my words were first misstated, and then wantonly applied to an individual, I could never learn that I had excited the dis- 20 pleasure of any among my literary contemporaries. Having announced my intention to give a course of lectures ² on the characteristic merits and defects of English poetry in its different eras; first, from Chaucer to Milton; second, from Dryden inclusive to Thomson; and third, from Cowper to 25 the present day; I changed my plan, and confined my disquisition to the two former eras, that I might furnish no possible pretext for the unthinking to misconstrue, or the malignant to misapply my words, and having stamped their own meaning on them, to pass them as current coin in the 30 marts of garrulity or detraction.

Praises of the unworthy are felt by ardent minds as robberies of the deserving ; and it is too true, and too frequent, that Bacon, Harrington, Machiavel, and Spinoza are not read, because Hume, Condillac, and Voltaire are. But in
 5 promiscuous company no prudent man will oppugn the merits of a contemporary in his own supposed department ; contenting himself with praising in his turn those whom he deems excellent. If I should ever deem it my duty at all to oppose the pretensions of individuals, I would oppose
 10 them in books which could be weighed and answered, in which I could evolve the whole of my reasons and feelings, with their requisite limits and modifications ; not in irrecoverable conversation, where, however strong the reasons might be, the feelings that prompted them would assuredly be
 15 attributed by some one or other to envy and discontent. Besides, I well know, and I trust have acted on that knowledge, that it must be the ignorant and injudicious who extol the unworthy ; and the eulogies of critics without taste or judgment are the natural reward of authors without feeling
 20 or genius. *Sint unicuique sua præmia.*¹

How then, dismissing, as I do, these three causes, am I to account for attacks, the long continuance and inveteracy of which it would require all three to explain. The solution may seem to have been given, or at least suggested, in a
 25 note to a preceding page. *I was in habits of intimacy with Mr. Wordsworth and Mr. Southey !*² This, however, transfers rather than removes the difficulty. Be it, that by an unconscionable extension of the old adage, *noscitur a socio*,³ my literary friends are never under the water-fall of criticism, but I must be wet through with the spray ; yet how
 30 came the torrent to descend upon *them* ?

First, then, with regard to Mr. Southey. I well remember the general reception of his earlier publications: viz., the poems published with Mr. Lovell under the names of Moschus and Bion (1795), the two volumes of poems under his own name (1797), and the *Joan of Arc* (1796). The censures of the critics by profession are extant, and may be easily referred to:—careless lines, inequality in the merit of the different poems, and (in the lighter works) a predilection for the strange and whimsical; in short, such faults as might have been anticipated in a young and rapid writer, were indeed sufficiently enforced. Nor was there at that time wanting a party spirit to aggravate the defects of a poet, who, with all the courage of uncorrupted youth, had avowed his zeal for a cause which he deemed that of liberty, and his abhorrence of oppression by whatever name consecrated. But it was as little objected by others, as dreamt of by the poet himself, that he preferred careless and prosaic lines on rule and of forethought, or indeed that he pretended to any other art or theory of poetic diction, besides that which we may all learn from Horace, Quintilian, the admirable dialogue *De Causis Corruptæ Eloquentiæ*,¹ or Strada's *Prolusions*; if indeed natural good sense and the early study of the best models in his own language had not infused the same maxims more securely, and, if I may venture the expression, more vitally. All that could have been fairly deduced was, that in his taste and estimation of writers Mr. Southey agreed far more with Warton than with Johnson. Nor do I mean to deny, that at all times Mr. Southey was of the same mind with Sir Philip Sidney in preferring an excellent ballad in the humblest style of poetry to twenty indifferent poems that strutted in the highest. And by

what have his works, published since then, been characterized, each more strikingly than the preceding, but by greater splendour, a deeper pathos, profounder reflections, and a more sustained dignity of language and of metre? Distant
 5 may the period be, but whenever the time shall come, when all his works shall be collected by some editor worthy to be his biographer, I trust that an *excerpta* of all the passages in which his writings, name, and character have been attacked, from the pamphlets and periodical works of the last twenty
 10 years, may be an accompaniment. Yet that it would prove medicinal in after times I dare not hope ; for as long as there are readers to be delighted with calumny, there will be found reviewers to calumniate. And such readers will become in all probability more numerous, in proportion as a still greater
 15 diffusion of literature shall produce an increase of sciolists ; and sciolism bring with it petulance and presumption. In times of old, books were as religious oracles ; as literature advanced, they next became venerable preceptors ; they then descended to the rank of instructive friends ; and as
 20 their numbers increased, they sank still lower to that of entertaining companions ; and at present they seem degraded into culprits to hold up their hands at the bar of every self-elected, yet not the less peremptory, judge, who chooses to write from humour or interest, from enmity or arrogance,
 25 and to abide the decision (in the words of Jeremy Taylor) “ of him that reads in malice, or him that reads after dinner.”¹

The same gradual retrograde movement may be traced in the relation which the authors themselves have assumed towards their readers. From the lofty address of Bacon :
 30 “ These are the meditations of Francis of Verulam, which, that posterity should be possessed of, he deemed *their*

interest ;” or from dedication to Monarch or Pontiff, in which the honour given was asserted in equipoise to the patronage acknowledged from Pindar’s

————— ἐπ’ ἄλλοι-
 -σι δ’ ἄλλοι μεγάλοι: τὸ δ’ ἔσχατον κορυ- 5
 -φοῦται βασιλεῦσι· Μηκέτι
 πάπταινε πόρσιον.
 εἴη σέ τε τοῦτον
 ὑψοῦ χρόνον πατεῖν, ἐμέ
 τε τοσσάδε νικαρόροις 10
 ὁμιλεῖν, πρόφαντον σορίαν καθ’ Ἑλ-
 -λανας ἐόντα παντᾶ.¹

Poets and Philosophers, rendered diffident by their very number, addressed themselves to “*learned* readers ;” then, aimed to conciliate the graces of “the *candid* reader ;” till, 15 the critic still rising as the author sank, the amateurs of literature collectively were erected into a municipality of judges, and addressed as the Town ! And now finally, all men being supposed able to read, and all readers able to judge, the multitudinous public, shaped into personal unity 20 by the magic of abstraction, sits nominal despot on the throne of criticism.² But, alas ! as in other despotisms, it but echoes the decisions of its invisible ministers, whose intellectual claims to the guardianship of the Muses seem, for the greater part, analogous to the physical qualifications 25 which adapt their oriental brethren for the superintendence of the Harem. Thus it is said that St. Nepomuc was installed the guardian of bridges, because he had fallen over one, and sunk out of sight. Thus, too, St. Cecilia is said to have been first propitiated by musicians, because, having 30

failed in her own attempts, she had taken a dislike to the art and all its successful professors. But I shall probably have occasion hereafter to deliver my convictions more at large concerning this state of things, and its influences on
5 taste, genius, and morality.

In the *Thalaba*, the *Madoc*, and still more evidently, in the unique¹ *Cid*, the *Kehama*, and as last, so best, the *Don Roderick*, Southey has given abundant proof: "*Se cogitasse quàm sit magnum dare aliquid in manus hominum: nec*
10 *persuadere sibi posse, non sæpe tractandum quod placere et semper et omnibus cupiat.*"² — PLIN. *Ep.* Lib. 7, *Ep.* 17. But, on the other hand, I guess that Mr. Southey was quite unable to comprehend wherein could consist the crime or mischief of printing half a dozen or more playful poems; or, to
15 speak more generally, compositions which would be enjoyed or passed over, according as the taste and humour of the reader might chance to be, provided they contained nothing immoral. In the present age "*perituræ parcere chartæ*"³ is emphatically an unreasonable demand. The merest trifle
20 he ever sent abroad had tenfold better claims to its ink and paper, than all the silly criticisms which prove no more than that the critic was not one of those for whom the trifle was written, and than all the grave exhortations to a greater reverence for the public. As if the passive page of a book,
25 by having an epigram or doggrel tale impressed on it, instantly assumed at once locomotive power and a sort of ubiquity, so as to flutter and buz in the ear of the public, to the sore annoyance of the said mysterious personage. But what gives an additional and more ludicrous absurdity to
30 these lamentations is the curious fact, that if, in a volume of poetry, the critic should find poem or passage which he

deems more especially worthless, he is sure to select and reprint it in the review; by which, on his own grounds, he wastes as much more paper than the author, as the copies of a fashionable review are more numerous than those of the original book; in some, and those the most prominent instances, as ten thousand to five hundred. I know nothing that surpasses the vileness of deciding on the merits of a poet or painter—not by characteristic defects, for where there is genius, these always point to his characteristic beauties—but by accidental failures or faulty passages; except the imprudence of defending it, as the proper duty and most instructive part of criticism. Omit, or pass slightly over, the expression, grace, and grouping of Raffael's figures; but ridicule in detail the knitting-needles and broom-twigs that are to represent trees in his backgrounds, and never let him hear the last of his gallipots! Admit that the *Allegro* and *Penoso* of Milton are not without merit; but repay yourself for this concession by reprinting at length the two poems on the *University Carrier*! As a fair specimen of his *Sonnets*, quote :

“A Book was writ of late called Tetrachordon;”

and as characteristic of his rhythm and metre, cite his literal translation of the first and second Psalm! In order to justify yourself, you need only assert that, had you dwelt chiefly on the beauties and excellencies of the poet, the admiration of these might seduce the attention of future writers from the objects of their love and wonder, to an imitation of the few poems and passages in which the poet was most unlike himself.

But till reviews are conducted on far other principles, and

with far other motives ; till in the place of arbitrary dictation and petulant sneers, the reviewers support their decisions by reference to fixed canons of criticism, previously established and deduced from the nature of man ; reflecting
5 minds will pronounce it arrogance in them thus to announce themselves to men of letters as the guides of their taste and judgment. To the purchaser and mere reader it is, at all events, an injustice. He who tells me that there are defects in a new work, tells me nothing which I should not have
10 taken for granted without his information. But he who points out and elucidates the *beauties* of an original work, does indeed give me interesting information, such as experience would not have authorized me in anticipating.¹ And as to compositions which the authors themselves announce
15 with "*Hæc ipsi novimus esse nihil*,"² why should we judge by a different rule two printed works, only because the one author is alive and the other in his grave? What literary man has not regretted the prudery of Spratt in refusing to let his friend Cowley appear in his slippers and dressing-
20 gown? I am not perhaps the only one who has derived an innocent amusement from the riddles, conundrums, trisyllable lines, &c., &c., of Swift and his correspondents, in hours of languor, when to have read his more finished works would have been useless to myself, and, in some sort, an act
25 of injustice to the author. But I am at a loss to conceive by what perversity of judgment these relaxations of his genius could be employed to diminish his fame as the writer of *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Tale of a Tub*. Had Mr. Southey written twice as many poems of inferior merit
30 or partial interest as have enlivened the journals of the day, they would have added to his honour with good and wise

men, not merely or principally as proving the versatility of his talents, but as evidences of the purity of that mind, which even in its levities never wrote a line which it need regret on any moral account.

I have in imagination transferred to the future biographer 5 the duty of contrasting Southey's fixed and well-earned fame, with the abuse and indefatigable hostility of his anonymous critics from his early youth to his ripest manhood. But I cannot think so ill of human nature as not to believe, that these critics have already taken shame to themselves, whether 10 they consider the object of their abuse in his moral or his literary character. For reflect but on the variety and extent of his acquirements ! He stands second to no man, either as an historian or as a bibliographer ; and when I regard him as a popular essayist (for the articles of his compositions in 15 the reviews are for the greater part essays on subjects of deep or curious interest rather than criticisms on particular works) — I look in vain for any writer, who has conveyed so much information, from so many and such recondite sources, with so many just and original reflections, in a style so lively 20 and poignant, yet so uniformly classical and perspicuous ; no one in short who has combined so much wisdom with so much wit ; so much truth and knowledge with so much life and fancy. His prose is always intelligible and always entertaining. In poetry he has attempted almost every species 25 of composition known before, and he has added new ones ; and if we except the highest lyric (in which how few, how very few even of the greatest minds have been fortunate), he has attempted every species successfully : from the political song of the day, thrown off in the playful overflow of honest 30 joy and patriotic exultation, to the wild ballad ;¹ from epis-

tolary ease and graceful narrative, to the austere and impetuous moral declamation ; from the pastoral claims and wild streaming lights of the *Thalaba*, in which sentiment and imagery have given permanence even to the excitement of
5 curiosity ; and from the full blaze of the *Kehama* (a gallery of finished pictures in one splendid fancy piece, in which, notwithstanding, the moral grandeur rises gradually above the brilliance of the colouring and the boldness and novelty of the machinery) to the more sober beauties of the *Madoc* ;
10 and lastly, from the *Madoc* to his *Roderick*, in which, retaining all his former excellencies of a poet eminently inventive and picturesque, he has surpassed himself in language and metre, in the construction of the whole, and in the splendour of particular passages.

15 Here then shall I conclude? No ! The characters of the deceased, like the encomia on tombstones, as they are described with religious tenderness, so are they read, with allowing sympathy indeed, but yet with rational deduction. There are men who deserve a higher record ; men with whose characters it is the interest of their contemporaries, no less than
20 that of posterity, to be made acquainted ; while it is yet possible for impartial censure, and even for quick-sighted envy, to cross-examine the tale without offence to the courtesies of humanity ; and while the eulogist detected in exaggeration or falsehood must pay the full penalty of his baseness
25 in the contempt which brands the convicted flatterer. Publicly has Mr. Southey been reviled by men, who (I would fain hope for the honour of human nature) hurled fire-brands against a figure of their own imagination, publicly have his
30 talents been depreciated, his principles denounced ; as publicly do I therefore, who have known him intimately, deem

it my duty to leave recorded, that it is Southey's almost unexampled felicity to possess the best gifts of talent and genius free from all their characteristic defects. To those who remember the state of our public schools and universities some twenty years past, it will appear no ordinary praise 5 in any man to have passed from innocence into virtue, not only free from all vicious habit, but unstained by one act of intemperance, or the degradations akin to intemperance. That scheme of head, heart, and habitual demeanour, which in his early manhood, and first controversial writings, Milton, 10 claiming the privilege of self-defence, asserts of himself, and challenges his calumniators to disprove ; this will his school-mates, his fellow-collegians, and his maturer friends, with a confidence proportioned to the intimacy of their knowledge, bear witness to, as again realized in the life of Robert Southey. 15 But still more striking to those, who by biography or by their own experience are familiar with the general habits of genius, will appear the poet's matchless industry and perseverance in his pursuits ; the worthiness and dignity of those pursuits ; his generous submission to tasks of transitory interest, or 20 such as *his* genius alone could make otherwise ; and that having thus more than satisfied the claims of affection or prudence, he should yet have made for himself time and power, to achieve more, and in more various departments, than almost any other writer has done, though employed 25 wholly on subjects of his own choice and ambition. But as Southey possesses, and is not possessed by, his genius, even so is he the master even of his virtues. The regular and methodical tenour of his daily labours, which would be deemed rare in the most mechanical pursuits, and might be 30 envied by the mere man of business, loses all semblance of

formality in the dignified simplicity of his manners, in the spring and healthful cheerfulness of his spirits. Always employed, his friends find him always at leisure. No less punctual in trifles, than steadfast in the performance of highest
5 duties, he inflicts none of those small pains and discomforts which irregular men scatter about them, and which in the aggregate so often become formidable obstacles both to happiness and utility ; while on the contrary he bestows all the pleasures, and inspires all that ease of mind on those around
10 him or connected with him, which perfect consistency, and (if such a word might be framed) absolute reliability, equally in small as in great concerns, cannot but inspire and bestow : when this too is softened without being weakened by kindness and gentleness. I know few men who so well deserve the char-
15 acter which an ancient attributes to Marcus Cato, namely, that he was likest virtue, inasmuch as he seemed to act aright, not in obedience to any law or outward motive, but by the necessity of a happy nature which could not act otherwise. As son, brother, husband, father, master, friend, he moves with
20 firm yet light steps, alike unostentatious, and alike exemplary. As a writer, he has uniformly made his talents subservient to the best interests of humanity, of public virtue, and domestic piety ; his cause has ever been the cause of pure religion and of liberty, of national independence and of national illumina-
25 tion.¹ When future critics shall weigh out his guerdon of praise and censure, it will be Southey the poet only, that will supply them with the scanty materials for the latter. They will likewise not fail to record, that as no man was ever a more constant friend, never had poet more friends
30 and honourers among the good of all parties ; and that quacks in education, quacks in politics, and quacks in criticism were his only enemies.²

CHAPTER III.

The *Lyrical Ballads* with the preface — Mr. Wordsworth's earlier poems —
On fancy and imagination — The investigation of the distinction important to the fine arts.

I HAVE wandered from the object in view, but as I fancied to myself readers who would respect the feelings that had tempted me from the main road ; so I dare calculate on not a few, who will warmly sympathize with them. At present it will be sufficient for my purpose, if I have proved 5 that Mr. Southey's writings no more than my own, furnished the original occasion to this fiction of a new school of poetry, and of clamours against its supposed founders and proselytes.

As little do I believe that Mr. Wordsworth's *Lyrical Bal-* 10
lads were in themselves the cause. I speak exclusively of the two volumes so entitled. A careful and repeated examination of these confirms me in the belief, that the omission of less than a hundred lines would have precluded nine-
tenths of the criticism on this work. I hazard this declara- 15
tion, however, on the supposition, that the reader had taken it up, as he would have done any other collection of poems purporting to derive their subjects or interests from the incidents of domestic or ordinary life, intermingled with higher strains of meditation which the poet utters in his own per- 20
son and character ; with the proviso, that they were perused

without knowledge of, or reference to, the author's peculiar opinions, and that the reader had not had his attention previously directed to those peculiarities. In these, as was actually the case with Mr. Southey's earlier works, the lines
5 and passages which might have offended the general taste, would have been considered as mere inequalities, and attributed to inattention, not to perversity of judgment. The men of business who had passed their lives chiefly in cities, and who might therefore be expected to derive the highest
10 pleasure from acute notices of men and manners conveyed in easy, yet correct and pointed language ; and all those who, reading but little poetry, are most stimulated with that species of it which seems most distant from prose, would probably have passed by the volumes altogether. Others
15 more catholic in their taste, and yet habituated to be most pleased when most excited, would have contented themselves with deciding, that the author had been successful in proportion to the elevation of his style and subject. Not a few, perhaps, might by their admiration of the *Lines written near Tintern Abbey*, *Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree*, *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, and *Ruth*, have been gradually led to peruse with kindred feeling, *The Brothers*, the *Hart-leap Well*, and whatever other poems in that collection may be described as holding a middle place between
20 those written in the highest and those in the humblest style ; as for instance between the *Tintern Abbey* and *The Thorn*, or the *Simon Lee*. Should their taste submit to no further change, and still remain unreconciled to the colloquial phrases, or the imitations of them, that are, more or less,
25 scattered through the class last mentioned ; yet even from the small number of the latter, they would have deemed

them but an inconsiderable subtraction from the merit of the whole work ; or, what is sometimes not unpleasing in the publication of a new writer, as serving to ascertain the natural tendency, and consequently the proper direction of the author's genius. 5

In the critical remarks, therefore, prefixed and annexed to the *Lyrical Ballads*, I believe, that we may safely rest, as the true origin of the unexampled opposition which Mr. Wordsworth's writings have been since doomed to encounter.¹ The humbler passages in the poems themselves were 10 dwelt on and cited to justify the rejection of the theory. What in and for themselves would have been either forgotten or forgiven as imperfections, or at least comparative failures, provoked direct hostility when announced as intentional, as the result of choice after full deliberation. Thus 15 the poems, admitted by all as excellent, joined with those which had pleased the far greater number, though they formed two-thirds of the whole work, instead of being deemed (as in all right they should have been, even if we take for granted that the reader judged aright) an atone- 20 ment for the few exceptions, gave wind and fuel to the animosity against both the poems and the poet. In all perplexity there is a portion of fear, which predisposes the mind to anger. Not able to deny that the author possessed both genius and a powerful intellect, they felt very positive, 25 but were not quite certain, that he might not be in the right, and they themselves in the wrong ; an unquiet state of mind, which seeks alleviation by quarrelling with the occasion of it, and by wondering at the perverseness of the man, who had written a long and argumentative essay to 30 persuade them that —

“Fair is foul, and foul is fair;”

in other words, that they had been all their lives admiring without judgment, and were now about to censure without reason.¹

5 That this conjecture is not wide from the mark, I am induced to believe from the noticeable fact, which I can state on my own knowledge, that the same general censure should have been grounded almost by each different person on some different poem. Among those whose candour and
10 judgment I estimate highly, I distinctly remember six who expressed their objections to the *Lyrical Ballads* almost in the same words, and altogether to the same purport, at the same time admitting that several of the poems had given them great pleasure; and, strange as it might seem, the
15 composition which one had cited as execrable, another had quoted as his favourite. I am indeed convinced in my own mind, that could the same experiment have been tried with these volumes, as was made in the well-known story of the picture, the result would have been the same; the parts
20 which had been covered by the number of the black spots on the one day, would be found equally *albo lapide notatæ*² on the succeeding.

However this may be, it is assuredly hard and unjust to fix the attention on a few separate and insulated poems
25 with as much aversion as if they had been so many plague-spots on the whole work, instead of passing them over in silence, as so much blank paper, or leaves of a bookseller's catalogue; especially, as no one pretends to have found immorality or indelicacy; and the poems, therefore, at the
30 worst, could only be regarded as so many light or inferior coins in a rouleau of gold, not as so much alloy in a weight

of bullion. A friend whose talents I hold in the highest respect, but whose judgment and strong sound sense I have had almost continued occasion to revere, making the usual complaints to me concerning both the style and subjects of Mr. Wordsworth's minor poems; I admitted that 5 there were some few of the tales and incidents, in which I could not myself find a sufficient cause for their having been recorded in metre. I mentioned the *Alice Fell* as an instance. "Nay," replied my friend, with more than usual quickness of manner, "I cannot agree with you there! that 10 I own does seem to me a remarkably pleasing poem." In the *Lyrical Ballads* (for my experience does not enable me to extend the remark equally unqualified to the two subsequent volumes) I have heard at different times, and from different individuals, every single poem extolled and repro- 15 bated, with the exception of those of loftier kind, which as was before observed, seem to have won universal praise. This fact of itself would have made me diffident in my censures, had not a still stronger ground been furnished by the strange contrast of the heat and long continuance of the 20 opposition, with the nature of the faults stated as justifying it. The seductive faults, the *dulcia vitia* of Cowley, Marini, or Darwin, might reasonably be thought capable of corrupting the public judgment for half a century, and require a twenty years' war, campaign after campaign, in order to 25 dethrone the usurper and re-establish the legitimate taste. But that a downright simpleness, under the affectation of simplicity, prosaic words in feeble metre, silly thoughts in childish phrases, and a preference of mean, degrading, or at best trivial associations and characters, should succeed in 30 forming a school of imitators, a company of almost religious

admirers, and this too among young men of ardent minds,
liberal education, and not

“with academic laurels unbestowed;”

and that this bare and bald counterfeit of poetry, which
5 is characterized as below criticism, should for nearly twenty
years have well-nigh engrossed criticism, as the main, if not
the only butt of review, magazine, pamphlet, poem, and
paragraph; this is indeed matter of wonder! Of yet greater
is it, that the contest should still continue as undecided¹ as
10 that between Bacchus and the frogs in Aristophanes, when
the former descended to the realms of the departed to
bring back the spirit of old and genuine poesy:

X. βρεκεκεκέξ, κοὰξ, κοάξ!

Δ. ἀλλ' ἐξόλοισθ' αὐτῷ κοάξ.
οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔστ' ἄλλ' ἢ κοάξ.
οἰμώζετ' : οὐ γάρ μοι μέλει.

X. ἀλλὰ μὴν κεκραξόμεσθα
γ' ὅποσον ἢ φάρυγξ ἂν ἡμῶν
χανδάνη δι' ἡμέρας,
20 βρεκεκεκέξ, κοὰξ, κοάξ!

Δ. τούτῳ γὰρ οὐ νικήσετε.

X. οὐδὲ μὲν ἡμᾶς σὺ πάντως.

Δ. οὐδὲ μὴν ὑμεῖς γε δῆρ' ἄν
οὐδέποτε· κεκράξομαι γὰρ
25 κἄν με δέη δι' ἡμέρας,
ἕως ἂν ὑμῶν ἐπικρατήσω τοῦ κοάξ!

X. βρεκεκεκέξ, ΚΟÀΞ, ΚΟÀΞ!²

During the last year of my residence at Cambridge, I be-
came acquainted with Mr. Wordsworth's first publication,
30 entitled *Descriptive Sketches*; and, seldom, if ever, was

the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced.¹ In the form, style, and manner of the whole poem, and in the structure of the particular lines and periods, there is a harshness and acerbity connected and combined with words and images all a-glow, 5 which might recall those products of the vegetable world, where gorgeous blossoms rise out of the hard and thorny rind and shell, within which the rich fruit was elaborating. The language was not only peculiar and strong, but at times knotty and contorted, as by its own impatient strength; 10 while the novelty and struggling crowd of images, acting in conjunction with the difficulties of the style, demanded always a greater closeness of attention than poetry (at all events than descriptive poetry) has a right to claim. It not seldom, therefore, justified the complaint of obscurity. In 15 the following extract I have sometimes fancied that I saw an emblem of the poem itself and of the author's genius as it was then displayed:

"'Tis storm; and hid in mist from hour to hour,
 All day the floods a deepening murmur pour; 20
 The sky is veiled, and every cheerful sight:
 Dark is the region as with coming night;
 And yet what frequent bursts of overpowering light!
 Triumphant on the bosom of the storm,
 Glances the fire-clad eagle's wheeling form; 25
 Eastward, in long perspective glittering, shine
 The wood-crowned cliffs that o'er the lake recline;
 Wide o'er the Alps a hundred streams unfold,
 At once to pillars turn'd that flame with gold;
 Behind his sail the peasant strives to shun 30
 The West, that burns like one dilated sun,
 Where in a mighty crucible expire
 The mountains, glowing hot, like coals of fire."²

The poetic Psyche, in its process to full development, undergoes as many changes as its Greek namesake, the Butterfly.¹ And it is remarkable how soon genius clears and purifies itself from the faults and errors of its earliest products; faults which, in its earliest compositions, are the more obtrusive and confluent, because, as heterogeneous elements which had only a temporary use, they constitute the very ferment by which themselves are carried off. Or we may compare them to some diseases, which must work on the humours, and be thrown out on the surface, in order to secure the patient from their future recurrence. I was in my twenty-fourth year when I had the happiness of knowing Mr. Wordsworth personally,² and, while memory lasts, I shall hardly forget the sudden effect produced on my mind by his recitation of a manuscript poem which still remains unpublished, but of which the stanza and tone of style were the same as those of *The Female Vagrant*, as originally printed in the first volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*.³ There was here no mark of strained thought or forced diction, no crowd or turbulence of imagery; and, as the poet hath himself well described in his *Lines on Re-visiting the Wye*, manly reflection and human associations had given both variety and an additional interest to natural objects, which in the passion and appetite of the first love they had seemed to him neither to need or permit. The occasional obscurities which had risen from an imperfect control over the resources of his native language had almost wholly disappeared, together with that worse defect of arbitrary and illogical phrases, at once hackneyed and fantastic, which hold so distinguished a place in the *technique* of ordinary poetry, and will, more or less, alloy the earlier poems of the

truest genius, unless the attention has been specifically directed to their worthlessness and incongruity.¹ I did not perceive anything particular in the mere style of the poem alluded to during its recitation, except indeed such difference as was not separable from the thought and manner; 5 and the Spenserian stanza, which always, more or less, recalls to the reader's mind Spenser's own style, would doubtless have authorized, in my then opinion, a more frequent descent to the phrases of ordinary life, than could, without an ill effect, have been hazarded in the heroic couplet. It 10 was not, however, the freedom from false taste, whether as to common defects or to those more properly his own, which made so unusual an impression on my feelings immediately, and subsequently on my judgment. It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of 15 truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying, the objects observed; and, above all, the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world, around forms, incidents, and situations of which, for the common view, custom had be- 20 dimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew-drops.² "To find no contradiction in the union of old and new; to contemplate the Ancient of Days and all His works with feelings as fresh as if all had then sprang forth at the first creative fiat; characterizes the mind that feels the 25 riddle of the world, and may help to unravel it. To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar :

“ ‘ With sun and moon and stars throughout the year,
And man and woman; ’

this is the character and privilege of genius, and one of the marks which distinguish genius from talents. And, therefore, it is the prime merit of genius, and its most unequivocal mode of manifestation, so to represent familiar objects, as to awaken in the minds of others a kindred feeling concerning them, and that freshness of sensation which is the constant accompaniment of mental, no less than of bodily, convalescence. Who has not a thousand times seen snow fall on water? Who has not watched it with a new feeling from the time that he has read Burns’s comparison of sensual pleasure :

“ Or, like the snow-fall in the river,
A moment white — then gone for ever ! ” ¹

“ In poems, equally as in philosophic disquisitions, genius produces the strongest impressions of novelty, whilst it rescues the most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission. Truths of all others the most awful and mysterious, yet being at the same time of universal interest, are too often considered as so true, that they lose all the life and efficiency of truth, and lie bed-ridden in the dormitory of the soul side by side with the most despised and exploded errors.” ²

This excellence, which in all Mr. Wordsworth’s writings is more or less predominant, and which constitutes the character of his mind, I no sooner felt, than I sought to understand. Repeated meditations led me first to suspect (and a more intimate analysis of the human faculties, their appro-

priate marks, functions, and effects, matured my conjecture into full conviction), that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or, at furthest, the lower and higher degree of one and the same power. It is not, I own, easy to conceive a more opposite translation of the Greek *φαντασία* than the Latin *imaginatio*; but it is equally true that in all societies there exists an instinct of growth, a certain collective unconscious good sense, working progressively to desynonymize those words originally of the same meaning, which the conflux of dialects had supplied to the more homogeneous languages, as the Greek and German, and which the same cause, joined with accidents of translation from original works of different countries; occasion in mixed languages like our own. The first and most important point to be proved is, that two conceptions perfectly distinct are confused under one and the same word, and (this done) to appropriate that word exclusively to one meaning, and the synonyme, should there be one, to the other. But if (as will be often the case in the arts and sciences) no synonyme exists, we must either invent or borrow a word. In the present instance the appropriation had already begun, and been legitimated in the derivative adjective: Milton had a highly *imaginative*, Cowley a very *fanciful*, mind. If, therefore, I should succeed in establishing the actual existences of two faculties generally different, the nomenclature would be at once determined. To the faculty by which I had characterized Milton, we should confine the term *imagination*; while the other would be contra-distinguished as *fancy*.¹ Now were it once fully ascertained, that this division is no less grounded in nature than that of delirium from mania, or Otway's:

“Lutes, laurels, seas of milk, and ships of amber,”

from Shakespeare's :

“What! have his daughters brought him to this pass?”

or from the preceding apostrophe to the elements, the
 5 theory of the fine arts, and of poetry in particular, could
 not, I thought, but derive some additional and important
 light. It would, in its immediate effects, furnish a torch of
 guidance to the philosophical critic, and ultimately to the
 poet himself. In energetic minds truth soon changes by
 10 domestication into power; and, from directing in the 'dis-
 crimination and appraisal of the product, becomes influ-
 encive in the production. To admire on principle is the
 only way to imitate without loss of originality.

It has been already hinted that metaphysics and psychol-
 15 ogy have long been my hobby-horse. But to have a hobby-
 horse, and to be vain of it, are so commonly found together,
 that they pass almost for the same. I trust, therefore, that
 there will be more good humour than contempt in the smile
 with which the reader chastises my self-complacency, if I
 20 confess myself uncertain whether the satisfaction for the
 perception of a truth new to myself may not have been ren-
 dered more poignant by the conceit that it would be equally
 so to the public. There was a time, certainly, in which I
 took some little credit to myself in the belief that I had
 25 been the first of my countrymen who had pointed out the
 diverse meaning of which the two terms were capable, and
 analyzed the faculties to which they should be appropriated.
 Mr. W. Taylor's recent volume of synonymes I have not yet
 seen; but his specification of the terms in question has been
 30 clearly shown to be both insufficient and erroneous by Mr.

Wordsworth, in the preface added to the late collection of his *Lyrical Ballads*, and other poems.¹ The explanation which Mr. Wordsworth has himself given will be found to differ from mine chiefly, perhaps, as our objects are different. It could scarcely indeed happen otherwise, from the 5 advantage I have enjoyed of frequent conversation with him, on a subject to which a poem of his own first directed my attention, and my conclusions concerning which he had made more lucid to myself by many happy instances drawn from the operation of natural objects on the mind. But it 10 was Mr. Wordsworth's purpose to consider the influences of fancy and imagination as they are manifested in poetry, and from the different effects to conclude their diversity in kind ; while it is my object to investigate the seminal principle, and then from the kind to deduce the degree.² My friend 15 has drawn a masterly sketch of the branches, with their *poetic* fruitage. I wish to add the trunk, and even the roots, as far as they lift themselves above ground, and are visible to the naked eye of our common consciousness.

Yet even in this attempt I am aware that I shall be obliged 20 to draw more largely on the reader's attention than so immethodical a miscellany can authorize, when in such a work (*The Ecclesiastical Polity*) of such a mind as Hooker's the judicious author, though no less admirable for the perspicuity than for the port and dignity of his language ; and though 25 he wrote for men of learning in a learned age ; saw nevertheless occasion to anticipate and guard against "complaints of obscurity," as often as he was to trace his subject "to the highest well-spring and fountain." Which (continues he), "because men are not accustomed to, the pains we take are 30 more needful a great deal than acceptable ; and the matters

we handle seem by reason of newness (till the mind grow better acquainted with them) dark and intricate." I would gladly therefore spare both myself and others this labour, if I knew how without it to present an intelligible statement of
5 my poetic creed ; not as my opinions, which weigh for nothing, but as deductions from established premises conveyed in such a form, as is calculated either to effect a fundamental conviction, or to receive a fundamental confutation. If I may dare once more adopt the words of Hooker, " they,
10 unto whom we shall seem tedious, are in no wise injured by us, because it is in their own hands to spare that labour, which they are not willing to endure." Those at least, let me be permitted to add, who have taken so much pains to render me ridiculous for a perversion of taste, and have sup-
15 ported the charge by attributing strange notions to me on no other authority than their own conjectures, owe it to themselves as well as to me not to refuse their attention to my own statement of the theory, which I do acknowledge ; or shrink from the trouble of examining the grounds on
20 which I rest it, or the arguments which I offer in its justification.

CHAPTER IV.

Occasion of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and the objects originally proposed —
Preface to the second edition — The ensuing controversy, its causes and
acrimony — Philosophic definitions of a Poem and Poetry, with scholia.

DURING the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset, diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in

every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*,¹
5 in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension
10 of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy
15 of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

20 With this view I wrote the *Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing, among other poems, the *Dark Ladie*, and the *Christabel*, in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful,
25 and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the *Lyrical Ballads*
30 were published; and were presented by him, as an experi-

ment, whether subjects, which from their nature rejected the usual ornaments and extra-colloquial style of poems in general, might not be so managed in the language of ordinary life as to produce the pleasurable interest which it is the peculiar business of poetry to impart.¹ To the second edition he added a preface of considerable length ; in which, notwithstanding some passages of apparently a contrary import, he was understood to contend for the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject as vicious and indefensible all phrases and forms of style that were not included in what he (unfortunately, I think, adopting an equivocal expression) called the language of real life. From this preface, prefixed to poems in which it was impossible to deny the presence of original genius, however mistaken its direction might be deemed, arose the whole long-continued controversy.² For from the conjunction of perceived power with supposed heresy I explain the inveteracy, and in some instances, I grieve to say, the acrimonious passions, with which the controversy has been conducted by the assailants.

Had Mr. Wordsworth's poems been the silly, the childish things which they were for a long time described as being ; had they been really distinguished from the compositions of other poets merely by meanness of language and inanity of thought ; had they indeed contained nothing more than what is found in the parodies and pretended imitations of them ; they must have sunk at once, a dead weight, into the slough of oblivion, and have dragged the preface along with them. But year after year increased the number of Mr. Wordsworth's admirers. They were found, too, not in the lower classes of the reading public, but chiefly among young men of strong sensibility and meditative minds ; and their admira-

tion (inflamed perhaps in some degree by opposition) was distinguished by its intensity, I might almost say, by its religious fervour. These facts, and the intellectual energy of the author, which was more or less consciously felt, where
5 it was outwardly and even boisterously denied, meeting with sentiments of aversion to his opinions, and of alarm at their consequences, produced an eddy of criticism, which would of itself have borne up the poems by the violence with which it whirled them round and round. With many
10 parts of this preface, in the sense attributed to them, and which the words undoubtedly seem to authorize, I never concurred ; but, on the contrary, objected to them as erroneous in principle, and as contradictory (in appearance at least) both to other parts of the same preface and to the author's
15 own practice in the greater number of the poems themselves. Mr. Wordsworth, in his recent collection, has, I find, degraded this prefatory disquisition to the end of his second volume, to be read or not at the reader's choice.¹ But he has not, as far as I can discover, announced any
20 change in his poetic creed. At all events, considering it as the source of a controversy, in which I have been honoured more than I deserve by the frequent conjunction of my name with his, I think it expedient to declare, once for all, in what points I coincide with his opinions, and in what
25 points I altogether differ. But in order to render myself intelligible, I must previously, in as few words as possible, explain my ideas, first, of a poem ; and secondly, of poetry itself, in kind and in essence.

The office of philosophical disquisition consists in just
30 distinction ; while it is the privilege of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware that distinction is not

division.¹ In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts ; and this is the technical process of philosophy. But having so done, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity in which they actually co-exist ; and this is the result 5 of philosophy. A poem contains the same elements as a prose composition ; the difference, therefore, must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object proposed. According to the difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. It is pos- 10 sible that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observations by artificial arrangement ; and the composition will be a poem, merely because it is distinguished from prose by metre, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly. In this, the lowest sense, a man might 15 attribute the name of a poem to the well-known enumeration of the days in the several months :

“Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November,” &c.,

and others of the same class and purpose. And as a par- 20 ticular pleasure is found in anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities, all compositions that have this charm superadded, whatever be their contents, *may* be entitled poems.

So much for the superficial form. A difference of object 25 and contents supplies an additional ground of distinction. The immediate purpose may be the communication of truths ; either of truth absolute and demonstrable, as in works of science ; or of facts experienced and recorded, as in history. Pleasure, and that of the highest and most per- 30

manent kind, may result from the attainment of the end; but it is not itself the immediate end.¹ In other works the communication of pleasure may be the immediate purpose; and though truth, either moral or intellectual, ought
 5 to be the ultimate end, yet this will distinguish the character of the author, not the class to which the work belongs. Blest indeed is that state of society, in which the immediate purpose would be baffled by the perversion of the proper ultimate end; in which no charm of diction or imagery
 10 could exempt the Bathyllus even of an Anacreon, or the Alexis of Virgil, from disgust and aversion!

But the communication of pleasure may be the immediate object of a work not metrically composed; and that object may have been in a high degree attained, as in novels
 15 and romances. Would then the mere superaddition of metre, with or without rhyme, entitle these to the name of poems? The answer is, that nothing can permanently please, which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise. If metre be superadded, all other
 20 parts must be made consonant with it. They must be such as to justify the perpetual and distinct attention to each part, which an exact correspondent recurrence of accent and sound are calculated to excite. The final definition then, so deduced, may be thus worded. A poem is that species of
 25 composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification
 30 from each component part.²

Controversy is not seldom excited in consequence of the

disputants attaching each a different meaning to the same word ; and in few instances has this been more striking than in disputes concerning the present subject. If a man chooses to call every composition a poem, which is rhyme, or measure, or both, I must leave his opinion uncontro- 5 verted. The distinction is at least competent to characterize the writer's intention. If it were subjoined, that the whole is likewise entertaining or affecting, as a tale, or as a series of interesting reflections, I of course admit this as another fit ingredient of a poem, and an additional merit. 10 But if the definition sought for be that of a legitimate poem, I answer, it must be one the parts of which mutually support and explain each other ; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement. The philosophic critics of all 15 ages coincide with the ultimate judgment of all countries, in equally denying the praises of a just poem, on the one hand, to a series of striking lines or distichs, each of which absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself, disjoins it from its context, and makes it a separate whole, instead of a 20 harmonizing part ; and on the other hand, to an unsustained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result unattracted by the component parts. The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to 25 arrive at the final solution ; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself.¹ Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power ; or like the path of sound through the air, at every step he pauses and half recedes, 30 and from the retrogressive movement collects the force

which again carries him onward. *Præcipitandus est liber spiritus*,¹ says Petronius Arbiter most happily. The epithet, *liber*, here balances the preceding verb: and it is not easy to conceive more meaning condensed in fewer words.

5 But if this should be admitted as a satisfactory character of a poem, we have still to seek for a definition of poetry. The writings of Plato, and Bishop Taylor, and the *Theoria Sacra* of Burnet, furnish undeniable proofs that poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre, and even with-
 10 out the contradistinguishing objects of a poem.² The first chapter of Isaiah (indeed a very large proportion of the whole book) is poetry in the most emphatic sense; yet it would be not less irrational than strange to assert, that pleasure, and not truth, was the immediate object of the
 15 prophet. In short, whatever specific import we attach to the word poetry, there will be found involved in it, as a necessary consequence, that a poem of any length neither can be, nor ought to be, all poetry. Yet if a harmonious whole is to be produced, the remaining parts must be pre-
 20 served in keeping with the poetry; and this can be no otherwise effected than by such a studied selection and artificial arrangement as will partake of one, though not a peculiar, property of poetry. And this again can be no other than the property of exciting a more continuous and equal atten-
 25 tion than the language of prose aims at, whether colloquial or written.

My own conclusions on the nature of poetry, in the strictest use of the word, have been in part anticipated in the preceding disquisition on the fancy and imagination. What
 30 is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution

of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind. The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity.¹ • He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, control (*laxis effertur habenis*)² reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities ; of sameness, with difference ; of the general, with the concrete ; the idea, with the image ; the individual, with the representative ; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects ; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order ; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement ; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature ; the manner to the matter ; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. "Doubtless," as Sir John Davies observes of the soul (and his words may with slight alteration be applied, and even more appropriately, to the poetic imagination), —

"Doubtless this could not be, but that she turns
Bodies to spirit by sublimation strange,
As fire converts to fire the things it burns,
As we our food into our nature change.

"From their gross matter she abstracts their forms,
And draws a kind of quintessence from things;

Which to her proper nature she transforms
To bear them light on her celestial wings.

“ Thus does she, when from individual states
She doth abstract the universal kinds;

5 Which then re-clothed in divers names and fates
Steal access through our senses to our minds.”

Finally, good sense is the body of poetic genius, fancy its
drapery, motion its life, and imagination the soul that is
everywhere, and in each ; and forms all into one graceful
10 and intelligent whole.

CHAPTER V.

The specific symptoms of poetic power elucidated in a critical analysis of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece*.

IN the application of these principles to purposes of practical criticism as employed in the appraisal of works more or less imperfect, I have endeavoured to discover what the qualities in a poem are, which may be deemed promises and specific symptoms of poetic power, as distinguished from 5 general talent determined to poetic composition by accidental motives, by an act of the will, rather than by the inspiration of a genial and productive nature. In this investigation, I could not, I thought, do better, than keep before me the earliest work of the greatest genius, that per- 10 haps human nature has yet produced, our *myriad-minded*¹ Shakespeare. I mean the *Venus and Adonis*, and the *Lucrece*; works which give at once strong promises of the strength, and yet obvious proofs of the immaturity, of his genius. From these I abstracted the following marks, as 15 characteristics of original poetic genius in general.

1. In the *Venus and Adonis*, the first and most obvious excellence is the perfect sweetness of the versification; its adaptation to the subject; and the power displayed in vary- 20 ing the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm than was demanded by the thoughts, or permitted by the propriety of preserving a sense of mel-

ody predominant. The delight in richness and sweetness of sound, even to a faulty excess, if it be evidently original, and not the result of an easily imitable mechanism, I regard as a highly favourable promise in the compositions of a young man. "The man that hath not music in his soul" can indeed never be a genuine poet. Imagery (even taken from nature, much more when transplanted from books, as travels, voyages, and works of natural history) ; affecting incidents ; just thoughts ; interesting personal or domestic feelings ; and with these the art of their combination or intertexture in the form of a poem ; may all by incessant effort be acquired as a trade, by a man of talents and much reading, who, as I once before observed, has mistaken an intense desire of poetic reputation for a natural poetic genius ; the love of the arbitrary end for a possession of the peculiar means. But the sense of musical delight, with the power of producing it, is a gift of imagination ; and this, together with the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling, may be cultivated and improved, but can never be learnt. It is in these that "*Poeta nascitur non fit.*"¹

2. A second promise of genius is the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself. At least I have found, that where the subject is taken immediately from the author's personal sensations and experiences, the excellence of a particular poem is but an equivocal mark, and often a fallacious pledge, of genuine poetic power. We may perhaps remember the tale of the statuary, who had acquired considerable reputation for the legs of his goddesses, though the rest of the

statue accorded but indifferently with ideal beauty ; till his wife, elated by her husband's praises, modestly acknowledged that she herself had been his constant model. In the *Venus and Adonis*, this proof of poetic power exists even to excess. It is throughout as if a superior spirit, 5 more intuitive, more intimately conscious even than the characters themselves, not only of every outward look and act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings, were placing the whole before our view ; himself meanwhile unparticipating in the passions, 10 and actuated only by that pleasurable excitement which had resulted from the energetic fervour of his own spirit, in so vividly exhibiting what it had so accurately and profoundly contemplated. I think I should have conjectured from these poems, that even then the great instinct which im- 15 pelled the poet to the drama was secretly working in him, prompting him by a series and never-broken chain of imagery, always vivid, and because unbroken, often minute ; by the highest effort of the picturesque in words, of which words are capable, higher perhaps than was ever realized 20 by any other poet, even Dante not excepted ; to provide a substitute for that visual language, that constant intervention and running comment by tone, look, and gesture, which, in his dramatic works, he was entitled to expect from the players. His *Venus and Adonis* seem at once the charac- 25 ters themselves, and the whole representation of those characters by the most consummate actors. You seem to be told nothing, but to see and hear everything. Hence it is, that from the perpetual activity of attention required on the part of the reader ; from the rapid flow, the quick change, and 30 the playful nature of the thoughts and images ; and, above

all, from the alienation, and, if I may hazard such an expression, the utter aloofness of the poet's own feelings from those of which he is at once the painter and the analyst; that though the very subject cannot but detract from the pleasure of a delicate mind, yet never was poem less dangerous on a moral account. Instead of doing as Ariosto, and as, still more offensively, Wieland has done; instead of degrading and deforming passion into appetite, the trials of love into the struggles of concupiscence, Shakespeare has here represented the animal impulse itself, so as to preclude all sympathy with it, by dissipating the reader's notice among the thousand outward images, and now beautiful, now fanciful circumstances, which form its dresses and its scenery; or by diverting our attention from the main subject by those frequent witty or profound reflections which the poet's ever active mind has deduced from, or connected with, the imagery and the incidents.¹ The reader is forced into too much action to sympathize with the merely passive of our nature. As little can a mind thus roused and awakened be brooded on by mean and instinct emotion, as the low, lazy mist can creep upon the surface of a lake while a strong gale is driving it onward in waves and billows.

3. It has been before observed that images, however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit,²

“Which shoots its being through earth, sea, and air.”

In the two following lines, for instance, there is nothing objectionable, nothing which would preclude them from forming, in their proper place, part of a descriptive poem :

“Behold yon row of pines, that shorn and bow’d
Bend from the sea-blast, seen at twilight eve.”

5

But with the small alteration of rhythm, the same words would be equally in their place in a book of topography, or in a descriptive tour. The same image will rise into a semblance of poetry if thus conveyed :

10

“Yon row of bleak and visionary pines,
By twilight-glimpse discerned, mark ! how they flee
From the fierce sea-blast, all their tresses wild
Streaming before them.”

I have given this as an illustration, by no means as an instance, of that particular excellence which I had in view, and in which Shakespeare, even in his earliest as in his latest works, surpasses all other poets. It is by this that he still gives a dignity and a passion to the objects which he presents. Unaided by any previous excitement, they burst upon us at once in life and in power.

15

20

“Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye.”¹

“Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come —

25

* * * * *
* * * * *

The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,
 And the sad augurs mock their own presage :
 Incertainties now crown themselves assured,
 And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
 5 Now with the drops of this most balmy time
 My love looks fresh : and Death to me subscribes,
 Since, spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,
 While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.
 And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
 10 When tyrants' crests, and tombs of brass are spent."¹

As of higher worth, so doubtless still more characteristic
 of poetic genius does the imagery become, when it moulds
 and colours itself to the circumstances, passion, or charac-
 ter, present and foremost in the mind. For unrivalled in-
 15 stances of this excellence, the reader's own memory will
 refer him to the Lear, Othello, in short to which not of the
 "*great, ever living, dead man's*" dramatic works? *Inopem*
*me copia fecit.*² How true it is to nature, he has himself
 finely expressed in the instance of love in Sonnet xcvi.

20 "From you have I been absent in the spring,
 When proud-pied April drest in all his trim
 Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing;
 That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
 Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
 25 Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
 Could make me any summer's story tell,
 Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew :
 Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
 Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose ;
 30 They were, but sweet, but figures of delight,
 Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
 Yet seem'd it winter still, and you away,
 As with your shadow I with these did play ! "

Scarcely less sure, or if a less valuable, not less indispensable mark

Γόνιμον μὲν Ποιητοῦ —————
 ————— ὅστις ῥῆμα γενναῖον λάκοι,¹

will the imagery supply, when, with more than the power of 5
 the painter, the poet gives us the liveliest image of succession with the feeling of simultaneousness !

“ With this he breaketh from the sweet embrace
 Of those fair arms, that bound him to her breast,
 And homeward through the dark laund runs apace : 10
Look how a bright star shooteth from the sky !
*So glides he in the night from Venus’ eye.”*²

4. The last character I shall mention, which would prove indeed but little, except as taken conjointly with the former ; yet without which the former could scarce exist in a high 15 degree, and (even if this were possible) would give promises only of transitory flashes and a meteoric power ; — is depth and energy of thought. No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher.³ For poetry is the blossom and the fragrancy of all human 20 knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language. In Shakespeare’s Poems, the creative power and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war embrace. Each in its excess of strength seems to threaten the extinction of the other. At length, in the drama they were reconciled, and 25 fought each with its shield before the breast of the other. Or like two rapid streams that, at their first meeting within narrow and rocky banks, mutually strive to repel each other, and intermix reluctantly and in tumult, but soon finding a

wider channel and more yielding shores, blend and dilate, and flow on in one current and with one voice. The *Venus and Adonis* did not perhaps allow the display of the deeper passions. But the story of Lucretia seems, to favour, and
5 even demand, their intensest workings. And yet we find in Shakespeare's management of the tale neither pathos nor any other dramatic equality. There is the same minute and faithful imagery as in the former poem, in the same vivid colours, inspirited by the same impetuous vigour of thought,
10 and diverging and contracting with the same activity of the assimilative and of the modifying faculties ; and with a yet larger display, a yet wider range of knowledge and reflection ; and lastly, with the same perfect dominion, often domination, over the whole world of language. What, then,
15 shall we say ? even this, that Shakespeare, no mere child of nature ; no automaton of genius ; no passive vehicle of inspiration possessed by the spirit, not possessing it ; first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely, till knowledge, become habitual and intuitive, wedded itself
20 to his habitual feelings, and at length gave birth to that stupendous power, by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class ; to that power which seated him on one of the two glory-smitten summits of the poetic mountain, with Milton as his compeer, not rival. While the former
5 darts himself forth, and passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and the flood ; the other attracts all forms and things to himself, into the unity of his own ideal. All things and modes of action shape themselves anew in the being of Milton ; while Shakespeare becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself.¹
30 O what great men hast thou not produced, England ! my country ! Truly, indeed,

“ Must we be free or die, who speak the tongue,
Which Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold,
Which Milton held. In everything we are sprung
Of earth’s first blood, have titles manifold ? ” ¹

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CHAPTER VI.

Striking points of difference between the Poets of the present age and those of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries — Wish expressed for the union of the characteristic merits of both.

CHRISTENDOM, from its first settlement on feudal rights, has been so far one great body, however imperfectly organized, that a similar spirit will be found in each period to have been acting in all its members. The study of Shakespeare's Poems (I do not include his dramatic works, eminently as they too deserve that title) led me to a more careful examination of the contemporary poets both in this and in other countries.¹ But my attention was especially fixed on those of Italy, from the birth to the death of Shakespeare; that being the country in which the fine arts had been most sedulously, and hitherto most successfully, cultivated. Abstracted from the degrees and peculiarities of individual genius, the properties common to the good writers of each period seem to establish one striking point of difference between the poetry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and that of the present age. The remark may perhaps be extended to the sister art of painting. At least the latter will serve to illustrate the former. In the present age the poet (I would wish to be understood as speaking generally, and without allusion to individual names) seems to propose to himself as his main object, and as that which is

the most characteristic of his art, new and striking images ; with incidents that interest the affections or excite the curiosity. Both his characters and his descriptions he renders, as much as possible, specific and individual, even to a degree of portraiture. In his diction and metre, on the other hand, 5 he is comparatively careless. The measure is either constructed on no previous system, and acknowledges no justifying principle but that of the writer's convenience ; or else some mechanical movement is adopted, of which one couplet or stanza is so far an adequate specimen, as that the occasional differences appear evidently to arise from accident, or the qualities of the language itself, not from meditation and an intelligent purpose. And the language from Pope's translation of Homer, to Darwin's *Temple of Nature*, may, notwithstanding some illustrious exceptions, be too faithfully 15 characterized as claiming to be poetical for no better reason than that it would be intolerable in conversation or in prose.¹ Though, alas ! even our prose writings, nay, even the style of our more set discourses, strive to be in the fashion, and trick themselves out in the soiled and over-worn finery of 20 the meretricious muse. It is true, that of late a great improvement in this respect is observable in our most popular writers. But it is equally true, that this recurrence to plain sense and genuine mother English is far from being general ; and that the composition of our novels, magazines, public 25 harangues, &c., is commonly as trivial in thought, and yet enigmatic in expression, as if Echo and Sphinx had laid their heads together to construct it. Nay, even of those who have most rescued themselves from this contagion, I should plead inwardly guilty to the charge of duplicity or 30 cowardice if I withheld my conviction, that few have

guarded the purity of their native tongue with that jealous care, which the sublime Dante, in his tract, *De la nobile volgare eloquenza*, declares to be the first duty of a poet. For language is the armoury of the human mind; and at
 5 once contains the trophies of its past, and the weapons of its future conquests. “*Animadvertite, quam sit ab improprietate verborum prorum hominibus prolabi in errores circa res!*”¹ “*Sat vero, in hac vitæ brevitæ et naturæ obscuritate, rerum est, quibus cognoscendis tempus impendatur, ut*
 10 *confusis et multivocis sermonibus intelligendis illud consumere non opus est. Eheu! quantas strages paravere verba nubila, quæ tot dicunt, ut nihil dicunt—nubes potius, e quibus et in rebus politicis et in ecclesiâ turbines et tonitrua erumpunt! Et proinde recte dictum putamus a Platone in*
 15 *Gorgia: ὅς ἂν τὰ ὀνόματα εἶδει, εἴσεται καὶ τὰ πράγματα: et ab Epicteto, ἀρχὴ παιδείσεως ἡ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπίσκεψις: et prudentissime Galenus scribit, ἡ τῶν ὀνομάτων χρῆσις παραχθεῖσα καὶ τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων ἐπιταράττει γνῶσιν. Eg-*
 gie vero J. C. Scaliger, in Lib. I. de Plantis: *Est primum,*
 20 *inquit, sapientis officium, bene sentire, ut sibi vivat: proximum, bene loqui, ut patriæ vivat.*”²

Something analogous to the materials and structure of modern poetry I seem to have noticed (but here I beg to be understood as speaking with the utmost diffidence) in
 25 our common landscape painters.³ Their foregrounds and intermediate distances are comparatively unattractive: while the main interest of the landscape is thrown into the background, where mountains and torrents and castles forbid the eye to proceed, and nothing tempts it to trace its way back
 30 again. But in the works of the great Italian and Flemish masters, the front and middle objects of the landscape are

the most obvious and determinate, the interest gradually dies away in the background, and the charm and peculiar worth of the picture consists, not so much in the specific objects which it conveys to the understanding in a visual language formed by the substitution of figures for words, as in the beauty and harmony of the colours, lines and expression, with which the objects are represented. Hence novelty of subject was rather avoided than sought for. Superior excellence in the manner of treating the same subjects was the trial and test of the artist's merit.

Not otherwise is it with the more polished poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, especially with those of Italy. The imagery is almost always general; sun, moon, flowers, breezes, murmuring streams, warbling songsters, delicious shades, lovely damsels cruel as fair, nymphs, naiads, and goddesses, are the materials which are common to all, and which each shaped and arranged according to his judgment or fancy, little solicitous to add or to particularize.¹ If we make an honourable exception in favour of some English poets, the thoughts too are as little novel as the images; and the fable of their narrative poems, for the most part drawn from mythology, or sources of equal notoriety, derive their chief attractions from the manner of treating them, from impassioned flow, or picturesque arrangement. In opposition to the present age, and perhaps in as faulty an extreme, they placed the essence of poetry in the art. The excellence at which they aimed consisted in the exquisite polish of the diction, combined with perfect simplicity. This, their prime object, they attained by the avoidance of every word which a gentleman would not use in dignified conversation; and of every word and phrase which none but

a learned man would use ; by the studied position of words and phrases, so that not only each part should be melodious in itself, but contribute to the harmony of the whole, each note referring and conducing to the melody of all the foregoing and following words of the same period or stanza ; and, lastly, with equal labour, the greater because unbetrayed, by the variation and various harmonies of their metrical movement.¹ Their measures, however, were not indebted for their variety to the introduction of new metres, such as
10 have been attempted of late in the *Alonzo and Imogen* and others borrowed from the German, having in their very mechanism a specific overpowering tune, to which the generous reader humours his voice and emphasis, with more indulgence to the author than attention to the meaning or quantity
15 of the words, but which, to an ear familiar with the numerous sounds of the Greek and Roman poets, has an effect not unlike that of galloping over a paved road in a German stage-waggon without springs. On the contrary, the elder bards, both of Italy and England, produced a far greater as well as
20 more charming variety, by countless modifications and subtle balances of sound in the common metre of their country. A lasting and enviable reputation awaits that man of genius who should attempt and realize a union ; who should recall the high finish, the appropriateness, the facility, the delicate
25 proportion, and, above all, the perfusive and omnipresent grace which have preserved, as in a shrine of precious amber, the Sparrow of Catullus, the Swallow, the Grasshopper, and all the other little loves of Anacreon ; and which, with bright though diminished glories, revisited the
30 youth and early manhood of Christian Europe in the vales of Arnó,² and the groves of Isis and of Cam ; and who with

these should combine the keener interest, deeper pathos, manlier reflection, and the fresher and more various imagery which give a value and a name that will not pass away to the poets who have done honour to our own times, and to those of our immediate predecessors.

CHAPTER VII.

Examination of the tenets peculiar to Mr. Wordsworth — Rustic life (above all, low and rustic life) especially unfavourable to the formation of a human diction — The best parts of language the products of philosophers, not of clowns or shepherds — Poetry essentially ideal and generic — The language of Milton as much the language of real life, yea, incomparably more so, than that of the cottager.

As far, then, as Mr. Wordsworth in his preface contended, and most ably contended, for a reformation in our poetic diction; as far as he has evinced the truth of passion, and the dramatic propriety of those figures and metaphors in the
 5 original poets, which, stripped of their justifying reasons and converted into mere artifices of connection or ornament, constitute the characteristic falsity in the poetic style of the moderns; and as far as he has, with equal acuteness and clearness, pointed out the process by which this change was
 10 effected, and the resemblances between that state into which the reader's mind is thrown by the pleasurable confusion of thought from an unaccustomed train of words and images, and that state which is induced by the natural language of impassioned feeling; he undertook a useful task, and de-
 15 serves all praise, both for the attempt and for the execution.¹ The provocations to this remonstrance in behalf of truth and nature were still of perpetual recurrence before and after the publication of this preface,² I cannot likewise but add that the comparison of such poems of merit as have been given

to the public within the last ten or twelve years, with the majority of those produced previously to the appearance of that preface, leave no doubt on my mind that Mr. Wordsworth is fully justified in believing his efforts to have been by no means ineffectual.¹ Not only in the verses of those 5 who have professed their admiration of his genius, but even of those who have distinguished themselves by hostility to his theory and depreciation of his writings, are the impressions of his principles plainly visible. It is possible that with these principles others may have been blended, which are 10 not equally evident, and some which are unsteady and subvertible from the narrowness or imperfection of their basis. But it is more than possible that these errors of defect or exaggeration, by kindling and feeding the controversy, may have conduced not only to the wider propagation of the 15 accompanying truths, but that, by their frequent presentation to the mind in an excited state, they may have won for them a more permanent and practical result.² A man will borrow a part from his opponent the more easily, if he feel himself justified in continuing to reject a part. While there remain 20 important points in which he can still feel himself in the right, in which he still finds firm footing for continued resistance, he will gradually adopt those opinions which were the least remote from his own convictions, as not less congruous with his own theory than with that which he repro- 25 bates. In like manner, with a kind of instinctive prudence, he will abandon by little and little his weakest posts, till at length he seems to forget that they had ever belonged to him, or affects to consider them at most as accidental and "petty annexments," the removal of which leaves the cita- 30 del unhurt and unendangered.³

My own differences from certain supposed parts of Mr. Wordsworth's theory ground themselves on the assumption that his words had been rightly interpreted, as purporting that the proper diction for poetry in general consists altogether in a language taken, with due exceptions, from the mouths of men in real life, a language which actually constitutes the natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings.¹ My objection is, first, that in any sense this rule is applicable only to certain classes of poetry; secondly, that even to these classes it is not applicable, except in such a sense as hath never by any one (as far as I know or have read) been denied or doubted; and, lastly, that as far as, and in that degree in which, it is practicable, it is yet, as a rule, useless, if not injurious, and, therefore, either need not or ought not to be practised. The poet informs his reader that he had generally chosen low and rustic life, but not *as* low and rustic, or in order to repeat that pleasure of doubtful moral effect which persons of elevated rank and of superior refinement oftentimes derive from a happy imitation of the rude unpolished manners and discourse of their inferiors. For the pleasure so derived may be traced to three exciting causes. The first is the naturalness, in fact, of the things represented. The second is the apparent naturalness of the representation, as raised and qualified by an imperceptible infusion of the author's own knowledge and talent, which infusion does indeed constitute it an imitation, as distinguished from a mere copy. The third cause may be found in the reader's conscious feeling of his superiority, awakened by the contrast presented to him; even as for the same purpose the kings and great barons of yore retained sometimes actual clowns and fools

but more frequently shrewd and witty fellows in that character. These, however, were not Mr. Wordsworth's objects. He chose low and rustic life, "because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and 5 speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently may be more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and from the necessary character of rural 10 occupations are more easily comprehended and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature." 1

Now it is clear to me that in the most interesting of the poems, in which the author is more or less dramatic, as *The Brothers, Michael, Ruth, The Mad Mother, &c.*, the persons introduced are by no means taken from low or rustic life in the common acceptance of those words; and it is not 20 less clear, that the sentiments and language, as far as they can be conceived to have been really transferred from the minds and conversation of such persons, are attributable to causes and circumstances not necessarily connected with "their occupations and abode." The thoughts, feelings, 25 language, and manners of the shepherd-farmers in the vales of Cumberland and Westmoreland, as far as they are actually adopted in those poems, may be accounted for from causes which will and do produce the same results in every state of life, whether in town or country. As the two prin- 30 cipal, I rank that independence which raises a man above

servitude or daily toil for the profit of others, yet not above the necessity of industry and a frugal simplicity of domestic life, and the accompanying unambitious, but solid and religious, education which has rendered few books familiar but
5 the Bible and the liturgy or hymn-book.¹ To this latter cause indeed, which is so far accidental that it is the blessing of particular countries and a particular age, not the product of particular places or employments, the poet owes the show of probability that his personages might really
10 feel, think, and talk with any tolerable resemblance to his representation. It is an excellent remark of Dr. Henry More's, that "a man of confined education, but of good parts, by constant reading of the Bible, will naturally form a more winning and commanding rhetoric than those that are
15 learned, the intermixture of tongues and of artificial phrases debasing their style."²

It is, moreover, to be considered, that to the formation of healthy feelings, and a reflecting mind, negations involve impediments not less formidable than sophistication and
20 vicious intermixture. I am convinced that for the human soul to prosper in rustic life a certain vantage-ground is prerequisite. It is not every man that is likely to be improved by a country life or by country labours. Education, or original sensibility, or both, must pre-exist, if the changes,
25 forms, and incidents of nature are to prove a sufficient stimulant. And where these are not sufficient, the mind contracts and hardens by want of stimulants, and the man becomes selfish, sensual, gross, and hard-hearted. Let the management of the Poor Laws in Liverpool, Manchester, or
30 Bristol, be compared with the ordinary dispensation of the poor rates in agricultural villages, where the farmers are the

overseers and guardians of the poor. If my own experience has not been particularly unfortunate, as well as that of the many respectable country clergymen with whom I have conversed on the subject, the result would engender more than scepticism concerning the desirable influences of low and rustic life in and for itself. Whatever may be concluded on the other side, from the stronger local attachments and enterprising spirit of the Swiss, and other mountaineers, applies to a particular mode of pastoral life, under forms of property that permit and beget manners truly republican, not to rustic life in general, or to the absence of artificial cultivation. On the contrary the mountaineers, whose manners have been so often eulogized, are in general better educated and greater readers than men of equal rank elsewhere. But where this is not the case, as among the peasantry of North Wales, the ancient mountains, with all their terrors and all their glories, are pictures to the blind and music to the deaf.

I should not have entered so much into detail upon this passage, but here seems to be the point to which all the lines of difference converge as to their source and centre. (I mean, as far as, and in whatever respect, my poetic creed *does* differ from the doctrines promulged in this preface.) I adopt with full faith the principle of Aristotle, that poetry as poetry is essentially ideal,¹ that it avoids and excludes all accidents; that its apparent individualities of rank, character, or occupation must be representative of a class; and that the persons of poetry must be clothed with generic attributes, with the common attributes of the class; not with such as one gifted individual might possibly possess, but such as from his situation it is most probable before-

hand that he would possess. If my premises are right, and my deductions legitimate, it follows that there can be no poetic medium between the swains of Theocritus and those of an imaginary golden age.

5 The characters of the vicar and the shepherd-mariner in the poem of *The Brothers*, those of the shepherd of Greenhead Gill in *The Michael*, have all the verisimilitude and representative quality that the purposes of poetry can require. They are persons of a known and abiding class, and
 10 their manners and sentiments the natural product of circumstances common to the class. Take *Michael* for instance :

“ An old man stout of heart, and strong of limb :
 His bodily frame had been from youth to age
 Of an unusual strength : his mind was keen,
 15 Intense and frugal, apt for all affairs,
 And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
 And watchful more than ordinary men.
 Hence he had learnt the meaning of all winds,
 Of blasts of every tone, and oftentimes
 20 When others heeded not, he heard the South
 Make subterraneous music, like the noise
 Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
 The shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
 Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
 25 ‘ The winds are now devising work for me ! ’
 And truly at all times the storm, that drives
 The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
 Up to the mountains. He had been alone
 Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
 30 That came to him and left him on the heights.
 So lived he, till his eightieth year was passed.
 And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
 That the green vallies, and the streams and rocks,
 Were things indifferent to the shepherd's thoughts.

Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
 The common air; the hills, which he so oft
 Had climbed with vigorous steps; which had impressed
 So many incidents upon his mind
 Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear; . 5
 Which like a book preserved the memory
 Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
 Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts,
 So grateful in themselves, the certainty
 Of honourable gain; these fields, these hills 10
 Which were his living being, even more
 Than his own blood — what could they less? — had laid
 Strong hold on his affections, — were to him
 A pleasurable feeling of blind love, —
 The pleasure which there is in life itself." 1 15

On the other hand, in the poems which are pitched at a
 lower note, as the *Harry Gill*, the *Idiot Boy*, &c., the feel-
 ings are those of human nature in general; though the poet
 has judiciously laid the scene in the country, in order to
 place himself in the vicinity of interesting images, without 20
 the necessity of ascribing a sentimental perception of their
 beauty to the persons of his drama. In the *Idiot Boy*,
 indeed, the mother's character is not so much a real and
 native product of a "situation where the essential passions
 of the heart find a better soil, in which they can attain their 25
 maturity and speak a plainer and more emphatic language,"²
 as it is an impersonation of an instinct abandoned by judg-
 ment. Hence the two following charges seem to me not
 wholly groundless; at least, they are the only plausible ob-
 jections which I have heard to that fine poem. The one is, 30
 that the author has not, in the poem itself, taken sufficient
 care to preclude from the reader's fancy the disgusting

images of ordinary, morbid idiocy, which yet it was by no means his intention to represent. He has even by the "burr, burr, burr," uncounteracted by any preceding description of the boy's beauty, assisted in recalling them. The
5 other is, that the idiocy of the boy is so evenly balanced by the folly of the mother, as to present to the general reader rather a laughable burlesque on the blindness of anile dotage, than an analytic display of maternal affection in its ordinary workings.

10 In *The Thorn*, the poet himself acknowledges in a note the necessity of an introductory poem, in which he should have pourtrayed the character of the person from whom the words of the poem are supposed to proceed: a superstitious man moderately imaginative, of slow faculties and deep feel-
15 ings, "a captain of a small trading vessel, for example, who, being past the middle age of life, had retired upon an annuity, or small independent income, to some village or country town of which he was not a native, or in which he had not been accustomed to live. Such men, having nothing to do,
20 become credulous and talkative from indolence." But in a poem, still more in a lyric poem (and the Nurse in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* alone prevents me from extending the remark even to dramatic poetry, if indeed the Nurse itself can be deemed altogether a case in point), it is not
25 possible to imitate truly a dull and garrulous discourser without repeating the effects of dulness and garrulity. However this may be, I dare assert, that the parts (and these form the far larger portion of the whole) which might as well or still better have proceeded from the poet's own imagination, and
30 have been spoken in his own character, are those which have given, and which will continue to give, universal delight;

and that the passages exclusively appropriate to the supposed narrator, such as the last couplet of the third stanza,¹ the seven last lines of the tenth, and the five following stanzas, with the exception of the four admirable lines at the commencement of the fourteenth, are felt by many unprejudiced 5 and unsophisticated hearts, as sudden and unpleasant sinkings from the height to which the poet had previously lifted them, and to which he again re-elevates both himself and his reader.²

If then I am compelled to doubt the theory, by which the 10 choice of characters was to be directed, not only *à priori*, from grounds of reason, but both from the few instances in which the poet himself *need* be supposed to have been governed by it, and from the comparative inferiority of those instances; still more must I hesitate in my assent to the 15 sentence which immediately follows the former citation, and which I can neither admit as particular fact, or as general rule. “The language too of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such 20 men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society, and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the action of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple 25 and unelaborated expressions.”³ To this I reply, that a rustic’s language, purified from all provincialism and grossness, and so far re-constructed as to be made consistent with the rules of grammar (which are in essence no other than the laws of universal logic, applied to psychological 30 materials), will not differ from the language of any other

man of common sense, however learned or refined he may be, except as far as the notions which the rustic has to convey are fewer and more indiscriminate. This will become still clearer, if we add the consideration (equally important though
5 less obvious) that the rustic, from the more imperfect development of his faculties, and from the lower state of their cultivation, aims almost solely to convey insulated facts, either those of his scanty experience or his traditional belief; while the educated man chiefly seeks to discover and express
10 those connections of things, or those relative bearings of fact to fact, from which some more or less general law is deducible. For facts are valuable to a wise man, chiefly as they lead to the discovery of the indwelling law, which is the true being of things, the sole solution of their modes of existence,
15 and in the knowledge of which consists our dignity and our power.

As little can I agree with the assertion, that from the objects with which the rustic hourly communicates the best part of language is formed. For, first, if to communicate
20 with an object implies such an acquaintance with it as renders it capable of being discriminately reflected on, the distinct knowledge of an uneducated rustic would furnish a very scanty vocabulary. The few things, and modes of action, requisite for his bodily conveniences would alone
25 be individualized; while all the rest of nature would be expressed by a small number of confused general terms. Secondly, I deny that the words and combinations of words derived from the objects with which the rustic is familiar, whether with distinct or confused knowledge, can be justly
30 said to form the best part of language. It is more than probable, that many classes of the brute creation possess

discriminating sounds, by which they can convey to each other notices of such objects as concern their food, shelter, or safety. Yet we hesitate to call the aggregate of such sounds a language otherwise than metaphorically. The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from 5 reflection on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man; though in civilized society, by imitation and passive 10 remembrance of what they hear from their religious instructors and other superiors, the most uneducated share in the harvest which they neither sowed nor reaped. If the history of the phrases in hourly currency among our peasants were traced, a person not previously aware of the fact would be 15 surprised at finding so large a number, which three or four centuries ago were the exclusive property of the universities and the schools, and at the commencement of the Reformation had been transferred from the school to the pulpit, and thus gradually passed into common life. The extreme diffi- 20 culty, and often the impossibility, of finding words for the simplest moral and intellectual processes in the languages of uncivilized tribes has proved perhaps the weightiest obstacle to the progress of our most zealous and adroit missionaries. Yet these tribes are surrounded by the same 25 nature as our peasants are; but in still more impressive forms; and are, moreover, obliged to particularize many more of them. When therefore Mr. Wordsworth adds, "accordingly such a language" (meaning, as before, the language of rustic life purified from provincialism), "arising 30 out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more

permanent, and a far more philosophical, language than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets, who think they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art in proportion as they indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression ;”¹ it may be answered, that the language which he has in view can be attributed to rustics with no greater right than the style of Hooker or Bacon to Tom Brown or Sir Roger L’Estrange. Doubtless, if what is peculiar to each were omitted in each, the result must needs
 10 be the same. Further, that the poet who uses an illogical diction, or a style fitted to excite only the low and changeable pleasure of wonder by means of groundless novelty, substitutes a language of folly and vanity, not for that of the rustic, but for that of good sense and natural feeling.

15 Here let me be permitted to remind the reader, that the positions which I controvert are contained in the sentences — “a selection of the real language of men ;”² — “the language of these men (*i.e.* men in low and rustic life) I propose to myself to imitate, and as far as possible to
 20 adopt the very language of men.”³ “Between the language of prose and that of metrical composition there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference.”⁴ It is against these exclusively that my opposition is directed.⁵

I object, in the very first instance, to an equivocation in
 25 the use of the word “real.” Every man’s language varies, according to the extent of his knowledge, the activity of his faculties, and the depth or quickness of his feelings. Every ~~man’s~~ language has, first, its individualities ; secondly, the common properties of the class to which he belongs ; and
 30 thirdly, words and phrases of universal use. The language of Hooker, Bacon, Bishop Taylor, and Burke, differs from

the common language of the learned class only by the superior number and novelty of the thoughts and relations which they had to convey. The language of Algernon Sidney differs not at all from that which every well-educated gentleman would wish to write, and (with due allowances 5 for the undeliberateness, and less connected train of thinking natural and proper to conversation) such as he would wish to talk. Neither one or the other differ half as much from the general language of cultivated society as the language of Mr. Wordsworth's homeliest composition differs 10 from that of a common peasant. For "real," therefore, we must substitute ordinary, or *lingua communis*. And this, we have proved, is no more to be found in the phraseology of low and rustic life than in that of any other class. Omit the peculiarities of each, and the result of course must be 15 common to all. And assuredly the omissions and changes to be made in the language of rustics, before it could be transferred to any species of poem, except the drama or other professed imitation, are at least as numerous and weighty as would be required in adapting to the same pur- 20 pose the ordinary language of tradesmen and manufacturers. Not to mention that the language so highly extolled by Mr. Wordsworth varies in every county, nay, in every village, according to the accidental character of the clergyman, the existence or non-existence of schools; or even, perhaps, as 25 the exciseman, publican, or barber, happen to be, or not to be, zealous politicians, and readers of the weekly newspaper *pro bono publico*. Anterior to cultivation the *lingua communis* of every country, as Dante has well observed, exists everywhere in parts, and nowhere as a whole. 30

Neither is the case rendered at all more tenable by the

addition of the words, "in a state of excitement." For the nature of a man's words, when he is strongly affected by joy, grief, or anger, must necessarily depend on the number and quality of the general truths, conceptions, and images, and of the words expressing them, with which his mind had been previously stored. For the property of passion is not to create, but to set in increased activity. At least, whatever new connections of thoughts or images, or (which is equally, if not more than equally, the appropriate effect of strong excitement) whatever generalizations of truth or experience the heat of passion may produce, yet the terms of their conveyance must have pre-existed in his former conversations, and are only collected and crowded together by the unusual stimulation. It is indeed very possible to adopt in a poem the unmeaning repetitions, habitual phrases, and other blank counters which an unfurnished or confused understanding interposes at short intervals in order to keep hold of his subject, which is still slipping from him, and to give him time for recollection; or in mere aid of vacancy, as in the scanty companies of a country stage the same player pops backwards and forwards, in order to prevent the appearance of empty spaces, in the processions of *Macbeth* or *Henry VIII.* But what assistance to the poet, or ornament to the poem, these can supply, I am at a loss to conjecture. Nothing assuredly can differ either in origin or in mode more widely from the apparent tautologies of intense and turbulent feeling, in which the passion is greater and of longer endurance than to be exhausted or satisfied by a single representation of the image or incident exciting it. Such repetitions I admit to be a beauty of the highest kind;

as illustrated by Mr. Wordsworth himself from the song of Deborah. "At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down : at her feet he bowed, he fell : where he bowed, there he fell down dead." ¹

CHAPTER VIII.

Language of metrical composition, why and wherein essentially different from that of prose — Origin and elements of metre — Its necessary consequences, and the conditions thereby imposed on the metrical writer in the choice of his diction.

I CONCLUDE, therefore, that the attempt is impracticable ; and that, were it not impracticable, it would still be useless. For the very power of making the selection implies the previous possession of the language selected. Or where can
5 the poet have lived? And by what rules could he direct his choice, which would not have enabled him to select and arrange his words by the light of his own judgment? We do not adopt the language of a class by the mere adoption of such words exclusively as that class would use, or at least
10 understand ; but likewise by following the order in which the words of such men are wont to succeed each other. Now this order, in the intercourse of uneducated men, is distinguished from the diction of their superiors in knowledge and power by the greater disjunction and *separation*
15 in the component parts of that, whatever it be, which they wish to communicate. There is a want of that prospective-ness of mind, that *surview*, which enables a man to foresee the whole of what he is to convey, appertaining to any one point ; and by this means so to subordinate and arrange
20 the different parts according to their relative importance, as to convey it at once, and as an organized whole.

Now I will take the first stanza, on which I have chanced to open, in the *Lyrical Ballads*. It is one the most simple and the least peculiar in its language :

“In distant countries I have been,
 And yet I have not often seen 5
 A healthy man, a man full grown,
 Weep in the public roads, alone.
 But such a one, on English ground,
 And in the broad highway, I met;
 Along the broad highway he came, 10
 His cheeks with tears were wet.
 Sturdy he seemed, though he was sad,
 And in his arms a lamb he had.”¹

The words here are doubtless such as are current in all ranks of life : and of course not less so in the hamlet and 15 cottage, than in the shop, manufactory, college, or palace. But is this the order in which the rustic would have placed the words? I am grievously deceived, if the following less compact mode of commencing the same tale be not a far more faithful copy. “I have been in a many parts far and 20 near, and I don’t know that I ever saw before a man crying by himself in the public road ; a grown man I mean, that was neither sick nor hurt,” &c., &c. But when I turn to the following stanza in *The Thorn* :

“At all times of the day and night 25
 This wretched woman thither goes,
 And she is known to every star
 And every wind that blows :
 And there beside the thorn she sits,
 When the blue day-light’s in the skies : 30
 And when the whirlwind’s on the hill,
 Or frosty air is keen and still;

And to herself she cries,
 Oh misery ! Oh misery !
 Oh woe is me ! Oh misery ! ” ¹

and compare this with the language of ordinary men, or
 5 with that which I can conceive at all likely to proceed, in
 real life, from such a narrator as is supposed in the note to
 the poem — compare it either in the succession of the
 images or of the sentences — I am reminded of the sublime
 prayer and hymn of praise which Milton, in opposition to
 10 an established liturgy, presents as a fair specimen of com-
 mon extemporary devotion, and such as we might expect
 to hear from every self-inspired minister of a conventicle !
 And I reflect with delight, how little a mere theory, though
 of his own workmanship, interferes with the processes of gen-
 15 uine imagination in a man of true poetic genius, who pos-
 sesses, as Mr. Wordsworth, if ever man did, most assuredly
 does possess,

“The Vision and the Faculty divine.” ²

One point then alone remains, but that the most impor-
 20 tant ; its examination having been, indeed, my chief induce-
 ment for the preceding inquisition. “There neither is or
 can be any essential difference between the language of prose
 and metrical composition.” ³ Such is Mr. Wordsworth’s
 assertion. Now prose itself, at least in all argumentative
 25 and consecutive works, differs, and ought to differ, from the
 language of conversation ; even as reading ought to differ
 from talking. Unless, therefore, the difference denied be
 that of the mere words, as materials common to all styles
 of writing, and not of the style itself in the universally
 30 admitted sense of the term, it might be naturally presumed

that there must exist a still greater between the ordonnance of poetic composition and that of prose, than is expected to distinguish prose from ordinary conversation.

There are not, indeed, examples wanting in the history of literature, of apparent paradoxes that have summoned the public wonder as new and startling truths, but which on examination have shrunk into tame and harmless truisms; as the eyes of a cat, seen in the dark, have been mistaken for flames of fire. But Mr. Wordsworth is among the last men to whom a delusion of this kind would be attributed by any one who had enjoyed the slightest opportunity of understanding his mind and character. Where an objection has been anticipated by such an author as natural, his answer to it must needs be interpreted in some sense which either is, or has been, or is capable of being controverted. My object, then, must be to discover some other meaning for the term "essential difference" in this place, exclusive of the indistinction and community of the words themselves. For whether there ought to exist a class of words in the English in any degree resembling the poetic dialect of the Greek and Italian, is a question of very subordinate importance. The number of such words would be small indeed in our language; and even in the Italian and Greek, they consist not so much of different words as of slight differences in the forms of declining and conjugating the same words; forms, doubtless, which having been, at some period more or less remote, the common grammatic flexions of some tribe or province, had been accidentally appropriated to poetry by the general admiration of certain master intellects, the first established lights of inspiration, to whom that dialect happened to be native.

Essence, in its primary signification, means the principle of individuation, the inmost principle of the possibility of any thing, as that particular thing. It is equivalent to the idea of a thing, whenever we use the word idea with philosophic precision. Existence, on the other hand, is distinguished from essence by the superinduction of reality. Thus we speak of the essence and essential properties of a circle ; but we do not therefore assert, that any thing which really exists is mathematically circular. Thus too, without any tautology, we contend for the existence of the Supreme Being ; that is, for a reality correspondent to the idea. There is, next, a secondary use of the word essence, in which it signifies the point or ground of contradistinction between two modifications of the same substance or subject. Thus we should be allowed to say, that the style of architecture of Westminster Abbey is essentially different from that of Saint Paul's, even though both had been built with blocks cut into the same form, and from the same quarry. Only in this latter sense of the term must it have been denied by Mr. Wordsworth (for in this sense alone is it affirmed by the general opinion) that the language of poetry (*i.e.*, the formal construction, or architecture, of the words and phrases) is essentially different from that of prose. Now the burthen of the proof lies with the oppugner, not with the supporters of the common belief. Mr. Wordsworth, in consequence, assigns as the proof of his position, " that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the

language of prose, when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings even of Milton himself.”¹ He then quotes Gray’s sonnet :

“In vain to me the smiling mornings shine, 5
 And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire;
 The birds in vain their amorous descant join
 Or cheerful fields resume their green attire;
 These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
A different object do these eyes require; 10
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine,
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire!
 Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
 And new-born pleasure brings to happier men.
 The fields to all their wonted tribute bear, 15
 To warm their little loves the birds complain.
I fruitless mourn to him who cannot hear,
*And weep the more because I weep in vain;”*²

and adds the following remark : “It will easily be perceived, that the only part of this sonnet which is of any value is the 20 lines printed in italics. It is equally obvious that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word ‘fruitless’ for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose.”³

An idealist defending his system by the fact, that when 25 asleep we often believe ourselves awake, was well answered by his plain neighbour, “Ah! but when awake do we ever believe ourselves asleep?” Things identical must be convertible. The preceding passage seems to rest on a similar sophism. For the question is not, whether there may not 30 occur in prose an order of words, which would be equally proper in a poem; nor whether there are not beautiful lines

and sentences of frequent occurrence in good poems, which would be equally becoming as well as beautiful in good prose; for neither the one or the other has ever been either denied or doubted by any one. The true question
5 must be, whether there are not modes of expression, a construction, and an order of sentences, which are in their fit and natural place in a serious prose composition, but would be disproportionate and heterogeneous in metrical poetry; and, *vice versa*, whether in the language of a serious poem there
10 may not be an arrangement both of words and sentences, and a use and selection of (what are called) figures of speech, both as to their kind, their frequency, and their occasions, which on a subject of equal weight would be vicious and a lien in correct and manly prose. I contend,
15 that in both cases this unfitness of each for the place of the other frequently will and ought to exist.

And, first, from the origin of metre. This I would trace to the balance in the mind effected by that spontaneous effort which strives to hold in check the workings of pas-
20 sion. It might be easily explained likewise in what manner this salutary antagonism is assisted by the very state which it counteracts; and how this balance of antagonists became organized into metre (in the usual acceptation of that term) by a supervening act of the will and judgment,
25 consciously and for the foreseen purpose of pleasure. Assuming these principles as the data of our argument, we deduce from them two legitimate conditions, which the critic is entitled to expect in every metrical work. (First, that as the elements of metre owe their existence to a
30 state of increased excitement, so the metre itself should be accompanied by the natural language of excitement.

Secondly, that as these elements are formed into metre artificially, by a voluntary act, with the design and for the purpose of blending delight with emotion, so the traces of present volition should throughout the metrical language be proportionally discernible.) Now these two conditions must 5 be reconciled and co-present. There must be not only a partnership, but a union; an interpenetration of passion and of will, of spontaneous impulse and of voluntary purpose. Again, this union can be manifested only in a frequency of forms and figures of speech (originally the offspring of 10 passion, but now the adopted children of power) greater than would be desired or endured, where the emotion is not voluntarily encouraged, and kept up for the sake of that pleasure, which such emotion so tempered and mastered by the will is found capable of communicating. It not only 15 dictates, but of itself tends to produce, a more frequent employment of picturesque and vivifying language than would be natural in any other case in which there did not exist, as there does in the present, a previous and well-understood, though tacit, compact between the poet and his 20 reader, that the latter is entitled to expect, and the former bound to supply, this species and degree of pleasurable excitement. We may in some measure apply to this union the answer of Polixenes, in the *Winter's Tale* to Perdita's neglect of the streaked gilly-flowers, because she had heard 25 it said :

“There is an art which in their piedness shares
With great creating nature.”

Pol.

Say there be.

Yet nature is made better by no mean,
But nature makes that mean. So over that art,

Which you say adds to nature, is an art
 That nature makes! You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock:
 And make conceive a bark of baser kind
 5 By bud of nobler race. This is an art,
 Which does mend nature—change it rather; but
 The art itself is nature.”¹

Secondly, I argue from the effects of metre. As far as
 metre acts in and for itself, it tends to increase the vivacity
 10 and susceptibility both of the general feelings and of the
 attention. This effect it produces by the continued excitement
 of surprise, and by the quick reciprocations of curiosity
 still gratified and still re-excited, which are too slight
 indeed to be at any one moment objects of distinct con-
 15 sciousness, yet become considerable in their aggregate in-
 fluence. As a medicated atmosphere, or as wine during
 animated conversation, they act powerfully, though them-
 selves unnoticed. Where, therefore, correspondent food and
 appropriate matter are not provided for the attention and
 20 feelings thus roused, there must needs be a disappointment
 felt; like that of leaping in the dark from the last step of
 a staircase, when we had prepared our muscles for a leap
 of three or four.

The discussion on the powers of metre in the preface is
 25 highly ingenious, and touches at all points on truth. But
 I cannot find any statement of its powers considered ab-
 stractly and separately. On the contrary, Mr. Wordsworth
 seems always to estimate metre by the powers which it exerts
 during (and, as I think, in consequence of) its combination
 30 with other elements of poetry. Thus the previous difficulty
 is left unanswered, what the elements are with which it must

be combined in order to produce its own effects to any pleasurable purpose. Double and trisyllable rhymes, indeed, form a lower species of wit, and, attended to exclusively for their own sake, may become a source of momentary amusement; as in poor Smart's distich to the Welch Squire who had promised him a hare : 5

"Tell me, thou son of great Cadwallader!
Hast sent the hare? or hast thou swallow'd her?"

But for any poetic purposes, metre resembles (if the aptness of the simile may excuse its meanness) yeast, worthless or disagreeable by itself, but giving vivacity and spirit to the liquor with which it is proportionally combined. 10

The reference to the *Children in the Wood* by no means satisfies my judgment.¹ We all willingly throw ourselves back for awhile into the feelings of our childhood. This ballad, therefore, we read under such recollections of our own childish feelings, as would equally endear to us poems which Mr. Wordsworth himself would regard as faulty in the opposite extreme of gaudy and technical ornament. Before the invention of printing and, in a still greater degree, before the introduction of writing, metre, especially alliterative metre (whether alliterative at the beginning of the words, as in *Pierce Plouman*, or at the end as in rhymes), possessed an independent value as assisting the recollection, and consequently the preservation, of any series of truths or incidents. 20
But I am not convinced by the collation of facts that the *Children in the Wood* owes either its preservation or its popularity to its metrical form. Mr. Marshal's respository affords a number of tales in prose inferior in pathos and general merit, some of as old a date, and many as widely popular. 30

Tom Hickathrift, *Jack the Giant Killer*, *Goody Two Shoes*, and *Little Red Riding Hood*, are formidable rivals. And that they have continued in prose cannot be fairly explained by the assumption that the comparative meanness of their
 5 thoughts and images precluded even the humblest forms of metre. The scene of *Goody Two Shoes* in the church is perfectly susceptible of metrical narration; and among the *Θαύματα θαυμαστότατα*¹ even of the present age I do not recollect a more astonishing image than that of the “whole
 10 rookery, that flew out of the giant’s beard,” scared by the tremendous voice with which this monster answered the challenge of the heroic *Tom Hickathrift*.

If from these we turn to compositions universally, and independently of all early associations, beloved and admired,
 15 would the *Maria*, the *Monk*, or the *Poor Man’s Ass* of Stearne, be read with more delight, or have a better chance of immortality, had they, without any change in the diction, been composed in rhyme, than in their present state? If I am not grossly mistaken, the general reply would be in the
 20 negative. Nay, I will confess, that in Mr. Wordsworth’s own volumes, the *Anecdote for Fathers*, *Simon Lee*, *Alice Fell*, the *Beggars*, and the *Sailor’s Mother*, notwithstanding the beauties which are to be found in each of them where the poet interposes the music of his own thoughts, would
 25 have been more delightful to me in prose, told and managed, as by Mr. Wordsworth they would have been in a moral essay or pedestrian tour.²

Metre in itself is simply a stimulant of the attention, and therefore excites the question, Why is the attention to be
 30 thus stimulated? Now the question cannot be answered by the pleasure of the metre itself: for this we have shown

to be conditional, and dependent on the appropriateness of the thoughts and expressions to which the metrical form is superadded.¹ Neither can I conceive any other answer that can be rationally given, short of this : I write in metre, because I am about to use a language different from that of 5 prose. Besides, where the language is not such, how interesting soever the reflections are that are capable of being drawn by a philosophic mind from the thoughts or incidents of the poem, the metre itself must often become feeble. Take the three last stanzas of the *Sailor's Mother*, for in- 10 stance. If I could for a moment abstract from the effect produced on the author's feelings as a man, by the incident at the time of its real occurrence, I would dare appeal to his own judgment, whether in the metre itself he found sufficient reason for their being written metrically? 15

“And thus continuing, she said
 I had a son, who many a day
 Sailed on the seas; but he is dead;
 In Denmark he was cast away:
 And I have travelled far as Hull, to see 20
 What clothes he might have left, or other property.

“The bird and cage, they both were his;
 ’Twas my son’s bird; and neat and trim
 He kept it: many voyages
 This singing bird hath gone with him; 25
 When last he sailed he left the bird behind;
 As it might be, perhaps, from bodings of his mind.

“He to a fellow-lodger’s care
 Had left it, to be watched and fed,
 Till he came back again; and there 30
 I found it when my son was dead;
 And now, God help me for my little wit!
 I trail it with me, Sir! he took so much delight in it.”

If disproportioning the emphasis we read these stanzas so as to make the rhymes perceptible, even trisyllable rhymes could scarcely produce an equal sense of oddity and strangeness, as we feel here in finding rhymes at all in sentences so
 5 exclusively colloquial. I would rather ask whether, but for that visionary state into which the figure of the woman and the susceptibility of his own genius had placed the poet's imagination (a state which spreads its influence and colouring over all, that co-exists with the exciting cause, and in
 10 which

“The simplest, and the most familiar things
 Gain a strange power of spreading awe around them”¹⁾ —

I would ask the poet whether he would not have felt an abrupt down-fall in these verses from the preceding stanza?

15 “The ancient spirit is not dead;
 Old times, thought I, are breathing there!
 Proud was I, that my country bred
 Such strength, a dignity so fair!
 She begged an alms, like one in poor estate;
 20 I looked at her again, nor did my pride abate.”

It must not be omitted, and is besides worthy of notice, that those stanzas furnish the only fair instance that I have been able to discover in all Mr. Wordsworth's writings of an actual adoption, or true imitation, of the real and very lan-
 25 guage of low and rustic life, freed from provincialisms.

Thirdly, I deduce the position from all the causes elsewhere assigned, which render metre the proper form of poetry, and poetry imperfect and defective without metre. Metre therefore having been connected with poetry most
 30 often and by a peculiar fitness, whatever else is combined

with metre must, though it be not itself essentially poetic, have nevertheless some property in common with poetry, as an intermedium of affinity, a sort (if I may dare borrow a well-known phrase from technical chemistry) of *mordant* between it and the superadded metre. Now poetry, Mr. 5 Wordsworth truly affirms, does always imply passion: which word must be here understood, in its most general sense, as an excited state of the feelings and faculties.¹ And as every passion has its proper pulse, so will it likewise have its characteristic modes of expression. But where there exists 10 that degree of genius and talent which entitles a writer to aim at the honours of a poet, the very act of poetic composition itself is, and is allowed to imply and to produce, an unusual state of excitement, which of course justifies and demands a correspondent difference of language, as truly, 15 though not perhaps in as marked a degree, as the excitement of love, fear, rage or jealousy. The vividness of the descriptions or declarations in Donne, or Dryden, is as much and as often derived from the force and fervour of the describer, as from the reflections, forms, or incidents 20 which constitute their subject and materials. The wheels take fire from the mere rapidity of their motion. To what extent, and under what modifications, this may be admitted to act, I shall attempt to define in an after remark on Mr. Wordsworth's reply to this objection, or rather on his objec- 25 tion to this reply, as already anticipated in his preface.

Fourthly, and as intimately connected with this, if not the same argument in a more general form, I adduce the high spiritual instinct of the human being impelling us to seek unity by harmonious adjustment, and thus establishing the 30 principle, that all the parts of an organized whole must be

assimilated to the more important and essential parts. This and the preceding arguments may be strengthened by the reflection, that the composition of a poem is among the imitative arts; and that imitation, as opposed to copying, consists either in the interfusion of the same throughout the radically different, or of the different throughout a base radically the same.

Lastly, I appeal to the practice of the best poets, of all countries and in all ages, as authorizing the opinion (deduced from all the foregoing) that in every import of the word essential, which would not here involve a mere truism, there may be, is, and ought to be, an essential difference between the language of prose and of metrical composition.

In Mr. Wordsworth's criticism of Gray's Sonnet, the reader's sympathy with his praise or blame of the different parts is taken for granted rather perhaps too easily. He has not, at least, attempted to win or compel it by argumentative analysis. In my conception at least, the lines rejected as of no value do, with the exception of the two first, differ as much and as little from the language of common life, as those which he has printed in italics as possessing genuine excellence. Of the five lines thus honourably distinguished, two of them differ from prose even more widely than the lines which either precede or follow, in the position of the words :

*" A different object do these eyes require ;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire."*

But were it otherwise, what would this prove but a truth of which no man ever doubted? — videlicet, that there are

sentences, which would be equally in their place both in verse and prose. Assuredly it does not prove the point which alone requires proof; namely, that there are not passages, which would suit the one and not suit the other. The first line of this sonnet is distinguished from the ordinary language of men by the epithet to morning. (For we will set aside, at present, the consideration, that the particular word “smiling” is hacknied, and — as it involves a sort of personification — not quite congruous with the common and material attribute of shining.) And, doubtless, this adjunction of epithets for the purpose of additional description, where no particular attention is demanded for the quality of the thing, would be noticed as giving a poetic cast to a man’s conversation. Should the sportsman exclaim, “Come, boys! the rosy morning calls you up,” he will be supposed to have some song in his head. But no one suspects this when he says, “A wet morning shall not confine us to our beds.” This then is either a defect in poetry, or it is not. Whoever should decide in the affirmative, I would request him to re-peruse any one poem of any confessedly great poet from Homer to Milton, or from Æschylus to Shakespeare; and to strike out (in thought I mean) every instance of this kind. If the number of these fancied erasures did not startle him, or if he continued to deem the work improved by their total omission, he must advance reasons of no ordinary strength and evidence, reasons grounded in the essence of human nature. Otherwise I should not hesitate to consider him as a man not so much proof against all authority as dead to it.

The second line,

“And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire,”

has indeed almost as many faults as words. But then it is a bad line, not because the language is distinct from that of prose, but because it conveys incongruous images, because it confounds the cause and the effect, the real thing with the personified representative of the thing; in short, because it differs from the language of good sense. That the "Phœbus" is hacknied, and a schoolboy image, is an accidental fault, dependent on the age in which the author wrote, and not deduced from the nature of the thing. That it is part of an exploded mythology, is an objection more deeply grounded. Yet when the torch of ancient learning was rekindled, so cheering were its beams, that our eldest poets, cut off by Christianity from all accredited machinery, and deprived of all acknowledged guardians and symbols of the great objects of nature, were naturally induced to adopt, as a poetic language, those fabulous personages, those forms of the supernatural in nature, which had given them such dear delight in the poems of their great masters. Nay, even at this day what scholar of genial taste will not so far sympathize with them, as to read with pleasure in Petrarch, Chaucer, or Spenser, what he would perhaps condemn as puerile in a modern poet?

I remember no poet, whose writings would safelier stand the test of Mr. Wordsworth's theory, than Spenser. Yet will Mr. Wordsworth say, that the style of the following stanzas is either undistinguished from prose, and the language of ordinary life? Or that it is vicious, and that the stanzas are blots in the *Faëry Queen*?

30 "By this the northern waggoner had set
His sevenfold teme behind the stedfast starre,
That was in ocean waves yet never wet,

But firme is fixt and sendeth light from farre
 To all that in the wild deep wandering arre.
 And chearfull chaunticleer with his note shrill
 Had warned once that Phœbus' fiery carre
 In hast was climbing up the easterne hill, 5
 Full envious that night so long his roome did fill." 1

" At last the golden orientall gate
 Of greatest heaven gan to open fayre,
 And Phœbus fresh as brydegrome to his mate,
 Came dauncing forth, shaking his deawie hayre, 10
 And hurl'd his glist'ring beams through gloomy ayre;
 Which when the wakeful elfe perceived, streightway
 He started up, and did him selfe prepayre
 In sun-bright armes, and battailous array;
 For with that pagan proud he combat will that day." 2 15

On the contrary, to how many passages, both in hymn books and in blank verse poems, could I (were it not invidious) direct the reader's attention, the style of which is most unpoetic, because, and only because, it is the style of prose? He will not suppose me capable of having in my 20 mind such verses as

" I put my hat upon my head
 And walked into the Strand;
 And there I met another man,
 Whose hat was in his hand." 25

To such specimens it would indeed be a fair and full reply, that these lines are not bad because they are unpoetic, but because they are empty of all sense and feeling; and that it were an idle attempt to prove that "an ape is not a Newton, when it is evident that he is not a man." But the sense shall 30

be good and weighty, the language correct and dignified, the subject interesting and treated with feeling; and yet the style shall, notwithstanding all these merits, be justly blameable as prosaic, and solely because the words and the order
 5 of the words would find their appropriate place in prose, but are not suitable to metrical composition. The *Civil Wars* of Daniel is an instructive, and even interesting work: but take the following stanzas (and from the hundred instances which abound I might probably have selected others far more
 10 striking):

“And to the end we may with better ease
 Discern the true discourse, vouchsafe to shew
 What were the times foregoing near to these,
 That these we may with better profit know.
 15 Tell how the world fell into this disease;
 And how so great distemperature did grow;
 So shall we see with what degrees it came;
 How things at full do soon wax out of frame.

“Ten kings had from the Norman conqu’ror reign’d
 20 With intermixt and variable fate,
 When England to her greatest height attain’d
 Of power, dominion, glory, wealth, and state;
 After it had with much ado sustain’d
 The violence of princes with debate
 25 For titles, and the often mutinies
 Of nobles for their ancient liberties.

“For first the Norman, conqu’ring all by might,
 By might was forced to keep what he had got;
 Mixing our customs and the form of right
 30 With foreign constitutions, he had brought;
 Mastering the mighty, humbling the poorer wight,
 By all severest means that could be wrought;

And making the succession doubtful, rent
His new-got state and left it turbulent.”¹

Will it be contended, on the one side, that these lines are mean and senseless? Or on the other, that they are not prosaic, and for that reason unpoetic? This poet’s well-merited epithet is that of the “well-languaged Daniel;” but likewise and by the consent of his contemporaries no less than of all succeeding critics, the “prosaic Daniel.” Yet those, who thus designate this wise and amiable writer from the frequent incorrespondency of his diction to his metre in the majority of his compositions, not only deem them valuable and interesting on other accounts, but willingly admit that there are to be found throughout his poems, and especially in his *Epistles* and in his *Hymen’s Triumph*, many and exquisite specimens of that style which, as the neutral ground of prose and verse, is common to both. A fine and almost faultless extract, eminent as for other beauties so for its perfection in this species of diction, may be seen in Lamb’s *Dramatic Specimens*, &c., a work of various interest from the nature of the selections themselves (all from the plays of Shakespeare’s contemporaries), and deriving a high additional value from the notes, which are full of just and original criticism, expressed with all the freshness of originality.

Among the possible effects of practical adherence to a theory that aims to identify the style of prose and verse (if it does not indeed claim for the latter a yet nearer resemblance to the average style of men in the *vivâ voce* intercourse of real life) we might anticipate the following as not the least likely to occur. It will happen, as I have indeed before observed, that the metre itself, the sole

acknowledged difference, will occasionally become metre to the eye only. The existence of prosaisms, and that they detract from the merits of a poem must at length be conceded, when a number of successive lines can be rendered, 5 even to the most delicate ear, unrecognizable as verse, or as having even been intended for verse, by simply transcribing them as prose: when if the poem be in blank verse, this can be effected without any alteration, or at most by merely restoring one or two words 10 to their proper places, from which they had been transplanted¹ for no assignable cause or reason but that of the author's convenience; but if it be in rhyme, by the mere exchange of the final word of each line for some other of the same meaning, equally appropriate, dignified 15 and euphonic.

The answer or objection in the preface to the anticipated remark "that metre paves the way to other distinctions," is contained in the following words: — "The distinction of rhyme and metre is voluntary and uniform, and not like 20 that produced by (what is called) poetic diction, arbitrary and subject to infinite caprices, upon which no calculation whatever can be made. In the one case the reader is utterly at the mercy of the poet respecting what imagery or diction he may choose to connect with the passion."² But 25 is this a poet, of whom a poet is speaking? No, surely — rather of a fool or madman, or at best of a vain or ignorant phantast! And might not brains so wild and so deficient make just the same havoc with rhymes and metres as they are supposed to effect with modes and figures of speech? 30 How is the reader at the mercy of such men? If he continue to read their nonsense, is it not his own fault? The

ultimate end of criticism is much more to establish the principles of writing than to furnish rules how to pass judgment on what has been written by others; if indeed it were possible that the two could be separated. But if it be asked, by what principles the poet is to regulate his own style, if he do not adhere closely to the sort and order of words which he hears in the market, wake, high-road, or plough-field? I reply, by principles, the ignorance or neglect of which would convict him of being no poet, but a silly or presumptuous usurper of the name! By the principles of grammar, logic, psychology! In one word, by such a knowledge of the facts, material and spiritual, that most appertain to his art, as, if it have been governed and applied by good sense, and rendered instinctive by habit, becomes the representative and reward of our past conscious reasonings, insights, and conclusions, and acquires the name of taste. By what rule that does not leave the reader at the poet's mercy, and the poet at his own, is the latter to distinguish between the language suitable to suppressed, and the language which is characteristic of indulged, anger? Or between that of rage and that of jealousy? Is it obtained by wandering about in search of angry or jealous people in uncultivated society, in order to copy their words? Or not far rather by the power of imagination proceeding upon the all in each of human nature? By meditation, rather than by observation? And by the latter in consequence only of the former? As eyes, for which the former has predetermined their field of vision, and to which, as to its organ, it communicates a microscopic power? There is not, I firmly believe, a man now living, who has from his own inward experience a

clearer intuition than Mr. Wordsworth himself, that the last mentioned are the true sources of genial discrimination. Through the same process and by the same creative agency will the poet distinguish the degree and kind of the excitement produced by the very act of poetic composition. As intuitively will he know, what differences of style it at once inspires and justifies; what intermixture of conscious volition is natural to that state; and in what instances such figures and colours of speech degenerate into mere creatures of an arbitrary purpose, cold technical artifices of ornament or connection. For even as truth is its own light and evidence, discovering at once itself and falsehood, so is it the prerogative of poetic genius to distinguish by parental instinct its proper offspring from the changelings, which the gnomes of vanity or the fairies of fashion may have laid in its cradle or called by its names. Could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art. It would be *μόρφωσις* not *ποίησις*. The rules of the imagination are themselves the very powers of growth and production. The words, to which they are reducible, present only the outlines and external appearance of the fruit.¹ A deceptive counterfeit of the superficial form and colours may be elaborated; but the marble peach feels cold and heavy, and children only put it to their mouths. We find no difficulty in admitting as excellent, and the legitimate language of poetic fervour self-impassioned, Donne's apostrophe to the Sun in the second stanza of his *Progress of the Soul*:

"Thee, eye of heaven! this great soul envies not:

By thy male force is all we have begot.

In the first East thou now beginn'st to shine,

Suck'st early balm and island spices there;
 And wilt anon in thy loose-rein'd career
 At Tagus, Po, Seine, Thames, and Danow dine,
 And see at night this western world of mine :
 Yet hast thou not more nations seen than she, 5
 Who before thee one day began to be,
 And thy frail light being quenched, shall long, long outlive thee?"

Or the next stanza but one :

"Great Destiny, the commissary of God,
 That hast marked out a path and period 10
 For ev'ry thing! Who, where we offspring took,
 Our ways and ends see'st at one instant: thou
 Knot of all causes! Thou, whose changeless brow
 Ne'er smiles or frowns! O! vouchsafe thou to look,
 And shew my story in thy eternal book," &c. 15

As little difficulty do we find in excluding from the honours of unaffected warmth and elevation the madness prepense of pseudo-poesy, or the startling hysteric of weakness over-exerting itself, which bursts on the unprepared reader in sundry odes and apostrophes to abstract 20 terms. Such are the *Odes to Jealousy*, to *Hope*, to *Oblivion*, and the like, in *Dodsley's Collection* and the magazines of that day, which seldom fail to remind me of an Oxford copy of verses on the Two Suttons, commencing with:

25

"Inoculation, heavenly maid! descend!"

It is not to be denied that men of undoubted talents, and even poets of true though not of first-rate genius, have, from a mistaken theory, deluded both themselves and others in the opposite extreme. I once read to a company of 30 sensible and well-educated women the introductory period

of Cowley's preface to his *Pindaric Odes*, written in imitation of the style and manner of the odes of Pindar. "If," says Cowley, "a man should undertake to translate Pindar, word for word, it would be thought that one madman had
 5 translated another; as may appear when he that understands not the original reads the verbal traduction of him into Latin prose, than which nothing seems more raving." I then proceeded with his own free version of the *Second Olympic*, composed for the charitable purpose of rationaliz-
 10 ing the Theban Eagle: •

"Queen of all harmonious things,
 Dancing words and speaking strings,
 What God, what hero wilt thou sing?
 What happy man to equal glories bring?
 15 Begin, begin thy noble choice,
 And let the hills around reflect the image of thy voice.
 Pisa does to Jove belong,
 Jove and Pisa claim thy song.
 The fair first-fruits of war, th' Olympic games,
 20 Alcides offer'd up to Jove;
 Alcides too thy strings may move!
 But oh! what man to join with these can worthy prove?
 Join Theron boldly to their sacred names;
 Theron the next honour claims;
 25 Theron to no man gives place;
 Is first in Pisa's and in Virtue's race;
 Theron there, and he alone,
 Ev'n his own swift forefathers has outgone."

One of the company exclaimed, with the full assent of
 30 the rest, that if the original were madder than this, it must be incurably mad. I then translated the ode from the Greek, and as nearly as possible word for word; and the

impression was, that in the general movement of the periods, in the form of the connections and transitions, and in the sober majesty of lofty sense, it appeared to them to approach more nearly than any other poetry they had heard to the style of our Bible in the prophetic books. The first 5 strophe will suffice as a specimen:

“Ye harp-controlling hymns! (or) ye hymns the sovereigns of harps!
 What God? what Hero?
 What Man shall we celebrate?
 Truly Pisa indeed is of Jove. 10
 But the Olympiad (or the Olympic games) did Hercules establish,
 The first-fruits of the spoils of war.
 But Theron for the four-horsed car,
 That bore victory to him,
 It behoves us now to voice aloud: 15
 The Just, the Hospitable,
 The Bulwark of Agrigentum,
 Of renowned fathers
 The Flower, even him
 Who preserves his native city erect and safe.” 20

But are such rhetorical caprices condemnable only for their deviation from the language of real life? and are they by no other means to be precluded, but by the rejection of all distinctions between prose and verse, save that of metre? Surely, good sense and a moderate insight into 25 the constitution of the human mind would be amply sufficient to prove that such language and such combinations are the native produce neither of the fancy nor of the imagination; that their operation consists in the excitement of surprise by the juxtaposition and apparent reconciliation of widely different or incompatible things. As 30 when, for instance, the hills are made to reflect the image

of a voice. Surely no unusual taste is requisite to see clearly that this compulsory juxtaposition is not produced by the presentation of impressive or delightful forms to the inward vision, nor by any sympathy with the modifying
5 powers with which the genius of the poet had united and inspirited all the objects of his thought; that it is therefore a species of wit, a pure work of the will, and implies a leisure and self-possession both of thought and of feeling, incompatible with the steady fervour of a mind possessed
10 and filled with the grandeur of its subject. To sum up the whole in one sentence: When a poem, or a part of a poem, shall be adduced, which is evidently vicious in the figures and contexture of its style, yet for the condemnation of which no reason can be assigned, except that it differs from
15 the style in which men actually converse, then, and not till then, can I hold this theory to be either plausible or practicable, or capable of furnishing either rule, guidance, or precaution, that might not, more easily and more safely, as well as more naturally, have been deduced in the author's
20 own mind from considerations of grammar, logic, and the truth and nature of things, confirmed by the authority of works whose fame is not of one country, nor of one age.

CHAPTER IX.

Continuation — Concerning the real object which, it is probable, Mr. Wordsworth had before him, in his critical preface — Elucidation and application of this.

It might appear from some passages in the former part of Mr. Wordsworth's preface, that he meant to confine his theory of style, and the necessity of a close accordance with the actual language of men, to those particular subjects from low and rustic life, which by way of experiment he had purposed to naturalize as a new species in our English poetry. But from the train of argument that follows, from the reference to Milton, and from the spirit of his critique on Gray's Sonnet, those sentences appear to have been rather courtesies of modesty than actual limitations of his system. Yet so groundless does this system appear on a close examination, and so strange and overwhelming¹ in its consequences, that I cannot, and I do not, believe that the poet did ever himself adopt it in the unqualified sense in which his expressions have been understood by others, and which indeed, according to all the common laws of interpretation, they seem to bear. What then did he mean? I apprehend that, in the clear perception, not unaccompanied with disgust or contempt, of the gaudy affectations of a style which passed too current with too many for poetic diction (though, in truth, it had as little

pretensions to poetry as to logic or common sense), he narrowed his view for the time; and feeling a justifiable preference for the language of nature and of good sense, even in its humblest and least ornamented forms, he suffered
5 himself to express, in terms at once too large and too exclusive, his predilection for a style the most remote possible from the false and showy splendour which he wished to explode.¹ It is possible that this predilection, at first merely comparative, deviated for a time into direct partiality. But the real object which he had in view was, I
10 doubt not, a species of excellence which had been long before most happily characterized by the judicious and amiable Garve, whose works are so justly beloved and esteemed by the Germans, in his remarks on Gellert,² from
15 which the following is literally translated:—“The talent that is required, in order to make excellent verses, is perhaps greater than the philosopher is ready to admit, or would find it in his power to acquire; the talent to seek only the apt expression of the thought, and yet to find at
20 the same time with it the rhyme and the metre. Gellert possessed this happy gift, if ever any one of our poets possessed it; and nothing perhaps contributed more to the great and universal impression which his fables made on their first publication, or conduces more to their continued
25 popularity. It was a strange and curious phenomenon, and such as in Germany had been previously unheard of, to read verses in which everything was expressed, just as one would wish to talk, and yet all dignified, attractive, and interesting; and all at the same time perfectly correct as to the
30 measure of the syllables and the rhyme. It is certain that poetry, when it has attained this excellence, makes a far

greater impression than prose. So much so indeed, that even the gratification which the very rhymes afford, becomes then no longer a contemptible or trifling gratification."

However novel this phenomenon may have been in Germany at the time of Gellert, it is by no means new, nor yet 5 of recent existence in our language. Spite of the licentiousness with which Spenser occasionally compels the orthography of his words into a subservience to his rhymes, the whole *Faëry Queen* is an almost continued instance of this beauty. Waller's song, *Go, Lovely Rose*, &c., is doubtless 10 familiar to most of my readers; but if I had happened to have had by me the poems of Cotton, more but far less deservedly celebrated as the author of the *Virgil* travestied, I should have indulged myself, and I think have gratified many who are not acquainted with his serious works, by 15 selecting some admirable specimens of this style. There are not a few poems in that volume, replete with every excellence of thought, image, and passion, which we expect or desire in the poetry of the milder muse, and yet so worded that the reader sees no one reason either in the selection 20 or the order of the words why he might not have said the very same in an appropriate conversation, and cannot conceive how indeed he could have expressed such thoughts otherwise, without loss or injury to his meaning.

But in truth our language is, and from the first dawn of 25 poetry ever has been, particularly rich in compositions distinguished by this excellence. The final *e*, which is now mute, in Chaucer's age was either sounded or dropped indifferently. We ourselves still use either *beloved* or *belov'd* according as the rhyme, or measure, or the purpose of more or less 30 solemnity may require. Let the reader, then, only adopt

the pronunciation of the poet and of the court at which he lived, both with respect to the final *e* and to the accentuation of the last syllable : I would then venture to ask, what even in the colloquial language of elegant and unaffected women
 5 (who are the peculiar mistresses of “pure English and undefiled”) — what could we hear more natural, or seemingly more unstudied, than the following stanzas from Chaucer’s *Troilus and Creseide* :

10 “And after this forth to the gate he went,
 Ther as Creseide out rode a ful gode paas :
 And up and doun there made he many a wente,
 And to himselfe ful oft he said, Alas !
 Fro hennis rode my blisse and my solas :
 As wouldè blisful God now for his joie,
 15 I might her sene agen come in to Troie !
 And to the yondir hil I gan her guide,
 Alas ! and there I toke of her my leve :
 And yond I saw her to her fathir ride ;
 For sorow of whiche mine hart shall to-cleve ;
 20 And hithir home I came whan it was eve ;
 And here I dwel ; out-cast from allè joie,
 And shall, til I maie sene her este in Troie.
 And of himselfe imaginid he ofte
 To ben defaitid, pale and woxen lesse
 25 Than he was wonte, and that men saidin softe,
 What may it be ? who can the sothè guess,
 Why Troilus hath al this heviness ?
 And al this n’ as but his melancolie,
 That he had of himselfe suche fantasie.
 30 Anothir time imaginin he would
 Thate every wight, that past him by the wey
 Had of him routhe, and that thei saien should,
 I am right sorry, Troilus wol dey !
 And thus he drove a daie yet forth or twey

As ye have herde: suche life gan he to lede
 As he that stode betwixin hope and drede:
 For which him likid in his songis shewe
 Th' encheson of his wo as he best might,
 And made a songe of wordis but a fewe. 5
 Somwhat his woeful herté for to light,
 And when he was from every mann'is sight
 With softé voice hē of his lady dere,
 That absent was, gan sing as ye may here:

 This song when he thus songin had, ful sone 10
 He fel agen into his sighis olde:
 And every night, as was his wonte to done,
 He stodè the bright moonè to beholde
 And all his sorowe to the moone he tolde,
 And said: I wis, whan thou art hornid newe, 15
 I shall be glad, if al the world be trewe!"

Another exquisite master of this species of style, where the scholar and the poet supplies the material, but the perfect well-bred gentleman the expressions and the arrangement, is George Herbert. As from the nature of the subject, 20 and the too frequent quaintness of the thoughts, his *Temple*, or *Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations*, are comparatively but little known, I shall extract two poems. The first is a sonnet, equally admirable for the weight, number, and expression of the thoughts, and for the simple dignity of the 25 language (unless, indeed, a fastidious taste should object to the latter half of the sixth line). The second is a poem of greater length, which I have chosen not only for the present purpose, but likewise as a striking example and illustration of an assertion hazarded in a former page of these sketches; namely, that the characteristic fault of our elder poets is the reverse of that which distinguishes too many of our more

recent versifiers; the one conveying the most fantastic thoughts in the most correct and natural language, the other in the most fantastic language conveying the most trivial thoughts.¹ The latter is a riddle of words; the former an
 5 enigma of thoughts. The one reminds me of an odd passage in *Drayton's Ideas* :

SONNET IX.

10 "As other men, so I myself do muse,
 Why in this sort I wrest invention so;
 And why these *giddy metaphors* I use,
 Leaving the path the greater part do go?
 I will resolve you: *I am lunatic!*"

The other recalls a still odder passage in *The Synagogue*, or the *Shadow of the Temple*, a connected series of poems
 15 in imitation of Herbert's *Temple*, and in some editions annexed to it.

 "O how my mind
 Is gravell'd!
 Not a thought,
 20 That I can find,
 But's ravell'd
 All to nought!
 Short ends of threads,
 And narrow shreds
 25 Of lists,
 Knot's snarled ruffs,
 Loose broken tufts
 Of twists,
 Are my torn meditation's ragged clothing.
 30 Which, wound and woven, shape a suit for nothing:
 One while I think, and then I am in pain
 To think how to unthink that thought again!"

Immediately after these burlesque passages, I cannot proceed to the extracts promised, without changing the ludicrous tone of feeling by the interposition of the three following stanzas of Herbert's :

VIRTUE.

5

" Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky :
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,
For thou must die !

" Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye :
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die !

10

" Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie :
My music shows ye have your closes,
And all must die ! "

15

THE BOSOM SIN :

A SONNET BY GEORGE HERBERT.

" Lord, with what care hast thou begirt us round !
Parents first season us ; then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws : they send us bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers,
Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
Bibles laid open, millions of surprises ;
Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,
The sound of Glory ringing in our ears :
Without, our shame ; within, our consciences ;
Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears !

20

25

Yet all these fences, and their whole array
One cunning bosom sin blows quite away."

LOVE UNKNOWN.

"Dear friend, sit down, the tale is long and sad:

5 And in my faintings, I presume, your love
Will more comply than help. A Lord I had,
And have, of whom some grounds, which may improve,
I hold for two lives, and both lives in me.
To him I brought a dish of fruit one day
10 And in the middle placed my heart. But he

(I sigh to say)

Look'd on a servant who did know his eye
Better than you know me, or (which is one)
Than I myself. The servant instantly
15 Quitting the fruit, seized on my heart alone,
And threw it in a font, wherein did fall
A stream of blood, which issued from the side
Of a great rock: I well remember all,
And have good cause: there it was, dipped and dyed,
20 And washed, and wrung! the very wringing yet
Enforceth tears. "Your heart was foul, I fear."
Indeed 'tis true. I did and do commit
Many a fault, more than my lease will bear;
Yet still ask'd pardon, and was not denied.
25 But you shall hear. After my heart was well,
And clean and fair, as I one eventide

(I sigh to tell)

Walked by myself abroad, I saw a large
And spacious furnace flaming, and thereon
30 A boiling caldron, round about whose verge
Was in great letters set AFFLICTION.
The greatness show'd the owner. So I went
To fetch a sacrifice out of my fold,
Thinking with that, which I did thus present,
35 To warm his love, which, I did fear, grew cold.

But as my heart did tender it, the man
 Who was to take it from me, slipped his hand,
 And threw my heart into the scalding pan;
 My heart that brought it (do you understand?)
 The offerer's heart. "Your heart was hard, I fear." 5
 Indeed 'tis true. I found a callous matter
 Began to spread and to expatiate there:
 But with a richer drug than scalding water
 I bath'd it often, even with holy blood,
 Which at a board, while many drank bare wine, 10
 A friend did steal into my cup for good,
 Even taken inwardly, and most divine
 To supple hardnesses. But at the length
 Out of the caldron getting, soon I fled
 Unto my house, where to repair the strength 15
 Which I had lost, I hasted to my bed;
 But when I thought to sleep out all these faults
 (I sigh to speak)
 I found that some had stuff'd the bed with thoughts,
 I would say *thorns*. Dear, could my heart not break 20
 When with my pleasures even my rest was gone?
 Full well I understood who had been there:
 For I had given the key to none but one:
 It must be he. "Your heart was dull, I fear."
 Indeed a slack and sleepy state of mind 25
 Did oft possess me so, that when I prayed,
 Though my lip went, my heart did stay behind.
 But all my scores were by another paid,
 Who took the debt upon him. — "Truly, friend,
 For aught I hear, your Master shows to you 30
 More favour than you wot of. Mark the end!
 The font did only what was old renew:
 The caldron suppld what was grown too hard:
 The thorns did quicken what was grown too dull:
 All did but strive to mend what you had marr'd. 35
 Wherefore be cheered, and praise him to the full
 Each day, each hour, each moment of the week,
 Who fain would have you be new, tender, quick!"

CHAPTER X.

The former subject continued—The neutral style, or that common to Prose and Poetry exemplified by specimens from Chaucer, Herbert, and others.

I HAVE no fear in declaring my conviction, that the excellence defined and exemplified in the preceding chapter is not the characteristic excellence of Mr. Wordsworth's style ; because I can add, with equal sincerity, that it is pre-
5 cluded by higher powers. The praise of uniform adherence to genuine logical English is undoubtedly his ; nay, laying the main emphasis on the word "uniform," I will dare add that of all contemporary poets, it is his alone.¹ For in a less absolute sense of the word, I should certainly include
10 Mr. Bowles, Lord Byron, and, as to all his later writings, Mr. Southey, the exceptions in their works being so few and unimportant. But of the specific excellence described in the quotation from Garve, I appear to find more and more undoubted specimens in the works of others ; for instance,
15 among the minor poems of Mr. Thomas Moore, and of our illustrious Laureate. To me it will always remain a singular and noticeable fact, that a theory which would establish this *lingua communis*, not only as the best, but as the only commendable style, should have proceeded from a poet, whose
20 diction, next to that of Shakespeare and Milton, appears to me, of all others, the most individualized and characteristic.

And let it be remembered, too, that I am now interpreting the controverted passages of Mr. W.'s critical preface by the purpose and object which he may be supposed to have intended, rather than by the sense which the words themselves must convey, if they are taken without this allowance.¹ 5

A person of any taste, who had but studied three or four of Shakespeare's principal plays, would, without the name affixed, scarcely fail to recognize as Shakespeare's a quotation from any other play, though but of a few lines. A 10 similar peculiarity, though in a less degree, attends Mr. Wordsworth's style, whenever he speaks in his own person; or whenever, though under a feigned name, it is clear that he himself is still speaking, as in the different *dramatis personæ* of *The Recluse*.² Even in the other poems in which he 15 purposes to be most dramatic, there are few in which it does not occasionally burst forth. The reader might often address the poet in his own words with reference to persons introduced :

"It seems, as I retrace the ballad line by line, 20
That but half of it is theirs, and the better half is thine."

Who, having been previously acquainted with any considerable portion of Mr. Wordsworth's publications, and having studied them with a full feeling of the author's genius, would not at once claim as Wordsworthian the little poem 25
on the rainbow?

"The child is father of the man," &c.

Or in the *Lucy Gray*?

"No mate, no comrade Lucy knew :
She dwelt on a wide moor;

*The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door."*

Or in the *Idle Shepherd Boys*?

5 "Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chaunts a joyous song;
The thrush is busy in the wood,
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks
All newly born! both earth and sky
10 Keep jubilee, and more than all,
Those boys with their green coronal,
They never heard the cry,
That plaintive cry! which up the hill
Comes from the depth of Dungeon Gill."

15 Need I mention the exquisite description of the sea loch
in the *Blind Highland Boy*. Who but a poet tells a tale in
such language to the little ones by the fire-side as —

20 "Yet had he many a restless dream,
Both when he heard the eagle's scream,
And when he heard the torrents roar,
And heard the water beat the shore
Near where their cottage stood.

25 "Beside a lake their cottage stood,
Not small like ours, a peaceful flood;
But one of mighty size, and strange;
That rough or smooth is full of change,
And stirring in its bed.

30 "For to this lake by night and day,
The great sea-water finds its way
Through long, long windings of the hills,
And drinks up all the pretty rills;
And rivers large and strong:

“Then hurries back the road it came —
Returns on errand still the same;
This did it when the earth was new;
And this for evermore will do,
As long as earth shall last.

5

“And with the coming of the tide,
Come boats and ships that sweetly ride,
Between the woods and lofty rocks;
And to the shepherds with their flocks
Bring tales of distant lands.”

10

I might quote almost the whole of his *Ruth*, but take the following stanzas :

“But as you have before been told,
This stripling, sportive, gay, and bold,
And with his dancing crest,
So beautiful, through savage lands
Had roam'd about with vagrant bands
Of Indians in the West.

15

“The wind, the tempest roaring high,
The tumult of a tropic sky,
Might well be dangerous food
For him, a youth to whom was given
So much of earth, so much of heaven,
And such impetuous blood.

20

“Whatever in those climes he found
Irregular in sight or sound,
Did to his mind impart
A kindred impulse; seem'd allied
To his own powers, and justified
The workings of his heart.

25

30

“Nor less to feed voluptuous thought
The beauteous forms of nature wrought

Fair trees and lovely flowers;
 The breezes their own languor lent,
 The stars had feelings, which they sent
 Into those magic bowers.

5 “Yet in his worst pursuits, I ween,
 That sometimes there did intervene
 Pure hopes of high intent:
 For passions, link'd to forms so fair
 And stately, needs must have their share
 10 Of noble sentiment.”

But from Mr. Wordsworth's more elevated compositions, which already form three-fourths of his works, and will, I trust, constitute hereafter a still greater proportion; — from these, whether in rhyme or in blank verse, it would be difficult
 15 and almost superfluous to select instances of a diction peculiarly his own, of a style which cannot be imitated without being at once recognized as originating in Mr. Wordsworth. It would not be easy to open on any one of his loftier strains, that does not contain examples of this; and more in proportion as the lines are more excellent and most like the
 20 author. For those who may happen to be less familiar with his writings, I will give three specimens taken with little choice. The first, from the *Prelude*, on the boy of Windermere, — who

25 “Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
 That they might answer him. And they would shout,
 Across the watery vale and shout again
 With long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
 Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild
 30 Of mirth and jocund din! And when it chanced,
 That pauses of deep silence mock'd his skill,
 Then sometimes in that silence, while he hung

*Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
 Has carried far into his heart the voice
 Of mountain torrents: or the visible scene¹
 Would enter unawares into his mind
 With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
 Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
 Into the bosom of the steady lake."*²

5

The second shall be that noble imitation of Drayton³ (if it was not rather a coincidence) in the *Joanna*:

"When I had gazed perhaps two minutes' space,
 Joanna, looking in my eyes, beheld
 That ravishment of mind, and laughed aloud.
 The rock, like something starting from a sleep,
 Took up the lady's voice, and laughed again!
 That ancient woman seated on Helm-crag
 Was ready with her cavern! Hammar-scar,
 And the tall steep of Silver-How sent forth
 A noise of laughter: southern Loughrigg heard,
 And Fairfield answered with a mountain tone.
 Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky
 Carried the lady's voice! — old Skiddaw blew
 His speaking trumpet! — back out of the clouds
 From Glaramara southward came the voice:
 And Kirkstone tossed it from his misty head!"⁸

10

15

20

The third, which is in rhyme, I take from the *Song at the* 25
Feast of Brougham Castle, upon the restoration of Lord
 Clifford, the shepherd, to the estate of his ancestors:

"Now another day is come
 Fitter hope, and nobler doom:
 He hath thrown aside his crook,
 And hath buried deep his book;
 Armour rusting in the halls
 On the blood of Clifford calls; 30

30

Quell the Scot, exclaims the lance!
 Bear me to the heart of France,
 Is the longing of the shield —
 Tell thy name, thou trembling field!
 5 Field of death, where'er thou be,
 Groan thou with our victory!
 Happy day, and mighty hour,
 When our shepherd, in his power,
 Mailed and horsed with lance and sword,
 10 To his ancestors restored,
 Like a re-appearing star,
 Like a glory from afar,
 First shall head the flock of war!"

"Alas! the fervent harper did not know,
 15 That for a tranquil soul the lay was framed, .
 Who, long compelled in humble walks to go,
 Was softened into feeling, soothed, and tamed.

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie:
 His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
 20 The silence that is in the starry sky,
 The sleep that is among the lonely hills."

The words themselves in the foregoing extracts are, no
 doubt, sufficiently common for the greater part. (But in
 what poem are they not so? if we except a few misadvent-
 25 urous attempts to translate the arts and sciences into verse?)
 In *The Excursion* the number of polysyllabic (or what the
 common people call dictionary) words is more than usually
 great. And so must it needs be, in proportion to the number
 and variety of an author's conceptions, and his solicitude to
 30 express them with precision. But are those words in those
 places commonly employed in real life to express the same
 thought or outward thing? Are they the style used in the

ordinary intercourse of spoken words? No; nor are the modes of connections: and still less the breaks and transitions. Would any but a poet — at least could any one without being conscious that he had expressed himself with noticeable vivacity — have described a bird singing loud by, 5
 “The thrush is *busy* in the wood”? Or have spoken of boys with a string of club-moss round their rusty hats, as the boys “*with their green coronal*”? Or have translated a beautiful May-day into “*Both earth and sky keep jubilee*”? Or have brought all the different marks and circumstances of a sea- 10
 loch before the mind, as the actions of a living and acting power? Or have represented the reflection of the sky in the water as, “*That uncertain heaven received into the bosom of the steady lake*”? Even the grammatical construction is not unfrequently peculiar; as, “The wind, the tempest roaring 15
 high, the tumult of a tropic sky, might well be *dangerous food to him*, a youth to whom was given,” &c. There is a peculiarity in the frequent use of the ἀσυνάρτητον (*i.e.*, the omission of the connective particle before the last of several words, or several sentences used grammatically as single 20
 words, all being in the same case and governing or governed by the same verb), and not less in the construction of words by apposition (*to him, a youth*). In short, were there excluded from Mr. Wordsworth’s poetic compositions all that a literal adherence to the theory of his preface would exclude, 25
 two-thirds at least of the marked beauties of his poetry must be erased.¹ For a far greater number of lines would be sacrificed than in any other recent poet; because the pleasure received from Wordsworth’s poems being less derived either from excitement of curiosity or the rapid flow of narration, 30
 the striking passages form a larger proportion of their

value. I do not adduce it as a fair criterion of comparative excellence, nor do I even think it such ; but merely as matter of fact. I affirm, that from no contemporary writer could so many lines be quoted, without reference to the
5 poem in which they are found, for their own independent weight or beauty.¹ From the sphere of my own experience, I can bring to my recollection three persons, of no everyday powers and acquirements, who had read the poems of others with more and more unalloyed pleasure, and had
10 thought more highly of their authors, as poets ; who yet have confessed to me, that from no modern work had so many passages started up anew in their minds at different times, and as different occasions had awakened a meditative mood.

CHAPTER XI.

Remarks on the present mode of conducting critical journals.

LONG have I wished to see a fair and philosophical inquisition into the character of Wordsworth, as a poet, on the evidence of his published works ; and a positive, not a comparative, appreciation of their characteristic excellences, deficiencies, and defects. I know no claim that the mere opinion of any individual can have to weigh down the opinion of the author himself ; against the probability of whose parental partiality we ought to set that of his having thought longer and more deeply on the subject. But I should call that investigation fair and philosophical, in which the critic announces and endeavours to establish the principles, which he holds for the foundation of poetry in general, with the specification of these in their application to the different *classes* of poetry. Having thus prepared his canons of criticism for praise and condemnation, we would proceed to particularize the most striking passages to which he deems them applicable, faithfully noticing the frequent or infrequent recurrence of similar merits or defects, and as faithfully distinguishing what is characteristic from what is accidental, or a mere flagging of the wing. Then if his premises be rational, his deductions legitimate, and his conclusions justly applied, the reader, and possibly the poet himself, may adopt his judgment in the light of judgment and in the indepen-

dence of free agency. If he has erred, he presents his errors in a definite place and tangible form, and holds the torch and guides the way to their detection.¹

I most willingly admit, and estimate at a high value, the
5 services which the *Edinburgh Review*, and others formed afterwards on the same plan, have rendered to society in the diffusion of knowledge. I think the commencement of the *Edinburgh Review* an important epoch in periodical criticism ; and that it has a claim upon the gratitude of the liter-
10 ary republic, and indeed of the reading public at large, for having originated the scheme of reviewing those books only, which are susceptible and deserving of argumentative criticism.² Not less meritorious, and far more faithfully and in general far more ably executed, is their plan of supplying
15 the vacant place of the trash or mediocrity wisely left to sink into oblivion by their own weight, with original essays on the most interesting subjects of the time, religious or political ; in which the titles of the books or pamphlets prefixed furnish only the name and occasion of the disquisition. I do
20 not arraign the keenness or asperity of its damnatory style, in and for itself, as long as the author is addressed or treated as the mere impersonation of the work then under trial. I have no quarrel with them on this account, as long as no personal allusions are admitted, and no re-commitment (for
25 new trial) of juvenile performances, that were published, perhaps forgotten, many years before the commencement of the *Review* : since for the forcing back of such works to public notice no motives are easily assignable, but such as are furnished to the critic by his own personal malignity ; or
30 what is still worse, by a habit of malignity in the form of mere wantonness.³

“No private grudge they need, no personal spite :

The *viva sectio* is its own delight !

All enmity, all envy, they disclaim,

Disinterested thieves of our good name ;

Cool, sober murderers of their neighbour's fame !”¹

5

Every censure, every sarcasm respecting a publication which the critic, with the criticized work before him, can make good, is the critic's right. The writer is authorized to reply, but not to complain. Neither can any one prescribe to the critic how soft or how hard, how friendly or how bitter, 10 shall be the phrases which he is to select for the expression of such reprehension or ridicule. The critic must know what effect it is his object to produce ; and with a view to this effect must he weigh his words. But as soon as the critic betrays that he knows more of his author than the author's 15 publications could have told him, as soon as from this more intimate knowledge, elsewhere obtained, he avails himself of the slightest trait *against* the author, his censure instantly becomes personal injury, his sarcasms personal insults. He ceases to be a critic, and takes on him the most contemptible 20 character to which a rational creature can be degraded, that of a gossip, backbiter, and pasquillant : but with this heavy aggravation, that he steals the unquiet, the deforming passions of the world, into the museum ; into the very place which, next to the chapel and oratory, should be our sanc- 25 tuary, and secure place of refuge ; offers abominations on the altar of the Muses ; and makes its sacred paling the very circle in which he conjures up the lying and profane spirit.

This determination of unlicensed personality, and of per- 30 mitted and legitimate censure (which I owe in part to the

illustrious Lessing, himself a model of acute, spirited, sometimes stinging, but always argumentative and honourable criticism) is, beyond controversy, the true one ; and though I would not myself exercise all the rights of the latter, yet, let but the former be excluded, I submit myself to its exercise in the hands of others, without complaint and without resentment.

Let a communication be formed between any number of learned men in the various branches of science and literature ; and whether the president or central committee be in London, or Edinburgh, if only they previously lay aside their individuality, and pledge themselves inwardly, as well as ostensibly, to administer judgment according to a constitution and code of laws ; and if by grounding this code on the two-fold basis of universal morals and philosophic reason, independent of all foreseen application to particular works and authors, they obtain the right to speak each as the representative of their body corporate ; they shall have honour and good wishes from me, and I shall accord to them their fair dignities, though self-assumed, not less cheerfully than if I could inquire concerning them in the herald's office, or turn to them in the book of peerage. However loud may be the outcries for prevented or subverted reputation, however numerous and impatient the complaints of merciless severity and insupportable despotism, I shall neither feel nor utter aught but to the defence and justification of the critical machine. Should any literary Quixote find himself provoked by its sounds and regular movements, I should admonish him, with Sancho Panza, that it is no giant, but a windmill ; there it stands on its own place and its own hillock, never goes out of the way to attack any one, and to none, and from none,

either gives or asks assistance. When the public press has poured in any part of its produce between its mill-stones, it grinds it off, one man's sack the same as another, and with whatever wind may then happen to be blowing. All the two- and-thirty winds are alike its friends. Of the whole wide 5 atmosphere, it does not desire a single finger-breadth more than what is necessary for its sails to turn round in. But this space must be left free and unimpeded. Gnats, beetles, wasps, butterflies, and the whole tribe of ephemerals and insignificants, may flit in and out and between; may hum, 10 and buzz, and jar; may shrill their tiny pipes, and wind their puny horns, unchastised and unnoticed. But idlers and bravados of larger size and prouder show must beware how they place themselves within its sweep. Much less may they presume to lay hands on the sails, the strength of which is neither 15 greater or less than as the wind is which drives them round. Whomsoever the remorseless arm slings aloft, or whirls along with it in the air, he has himself alone to blame; though when the same arm throws him from it, it will more often double than break the force of his fall. 20

Putting aside the too manifest and too frequent interference of national party, and even personal predilection or aversion, and reserving for deeper feelings those worse and more criminal intrusions into the sacredness of private life, which not seldom merit legal rather than literary chastise- 25 ment, the two principal objects and occasions which I find for blame and regret in the conduct of the review in question are, first, its unfaithfulness to its own announced and excellent plan, by subjecting to criticism works neither indecent or immoral, yet of such trifling importance even in point of 30 size, and, according to the critic's own verdict, so devoid of

all merit, as must excite in the most candid mind the suspicion either that dislike or vindictive feelings were at work ; or that there was a cold prudential pre-determination to increase the sale of the *Review* by flattering the malignant
5 passions of human nature. That I may not myself become subject to the charge, which I am bringing against others, by an accusation without proof, I refer to the article on Dr. Rennell's sermon in the very first number of the *Edinburgh Review* as an illustration of my meaning. If in looking
10 through all the succeeding volumes the reader should find this a solitary instance, I must submit to that painful forfeiture of esteem which awaits a groundless or exaggerated charge.

The second point of objection belongs to this review only
15 in common with all other works of periodical criticism ; at least, it applies in common to the general system of all, whatever exception there may be in favour of particular articles. Or if it attaches to the *Edinburgh Review*, and to its only co-rival, the *Quarterly*, with any peculiar force, this results
20 from the superiority of talent, acquirement, and information which both have so undeniably displayed, and which doubtless deepens the regret though not the blame. I am referring to the substitution of assertion for argument ; to the frequency of arbitrary and sometimes petulant verdicts, not
25 seldom unsupported even by a single quotation from the work condemned, which might at least have explained the critic's meaning, if it did not prove the justice of his sentence. Even where this is not the case, the extracts are too often made without reference to any general grounds or rules from
30 which the faultiness or inadmissibility of the qualities attributed may be deduced, and without any attempt to show that

the qualities are attributable to the passage extracted. I have met with such extracts from Mr. Wordsworth's poems, annexed to such assertions, as lead me to imagine that the reviewer, having written his critique before he had read the work, had then pricked with a pin for passages wherewith to illustrate the various branches of his preconceived opinions. By what principle of rational choice can we suppose a critic to have been directed (at least in a Christian country, and himself, we hope, a Christian) who gives the following lines, portraying the fervour of solitary devotion excited by the magnificent display of the Almighty's works, as a proof and example of an author's tendency to downright ravings, and absolute unintelligibility?

“O then what soul was his, when on the tops
 Of the high mountains he beheld the sun 15
 Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked —
 Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth,
 And ocean's liquid mass, beneath him lay
 In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touched,
 And in their silent faces did he read 20
 Unutterable love! Sound needed none,
 Nor any voice of joy: his spirit drank
 The spectacle! sensation, soul, and form,
 All melted into him. They swallowed up
 His animal being: in them did he live, 25
 And by them did he live: they were his life.”¹

Can it be expected that either the author or his admirers should be induced to pay any serious attention to decisions which prove nothing but the pitiable state of the critic's own taste and sensibility? On opening the *Review* they see a favourite passage, of the force and truth of which they had 30

an intuitive certainty in their own inward experience, confirmed, if confirmation it could receive, by the sympathy of their most enlightened friends, some of whom perhaps, even in the world's opinion, hold a higher intellectual rank than
 5 the critic himself would presume to claim. And this very passage they find selected as the characteristic effusion of a mind deserted by reason ; as furnishing evidence that the writer was raving, or he could not have thus strung words together without sense or purpose ! No diversity of taste
 10 seems capable of explaining such a contrast in judgment.

That I had overrated the merit of a passage or poem, that I had erred concerning the degree of its excellence, I might be easily induced to believe or apprehend. But that lines, the sense of which I had analyzed and found consonant with
 15 all the best convictions of my understanding, and the imagery and diction of which had collected round those convictions my noblest as well as my most delightful feelings ; that I should admit such lines to be mere nonsense or lunacy, is too much for the most ingenious arguments to effect. But
 20 that such a revolution of taste should be brought about by a few broad assertions, seems little less than impossible. On the contrary, it would require an effort of charity not to dismiss the criticism with the aphorism of the wise man, *in animam malevolam sapientia haud intrare potest*.¹

25 What then if this very critic should have cited a large number of single lines, and even of long paragraphs, which he himself acknowledges to possess eminent and original beauty ? What if he himself has owned that beauties as great are scattered in abundance throughout the whole book ?
 30 And yet, though under this impression, should have commenced his critique in vulgar exaltation with a prophecy

meant to secure its own fulfilment? With a "This won't do!"¹ What if after such acknowledgments, extorted from his own judgment, he should proceed from charge to charge of tameness and raving, flights and flatness; and at length, consigning the author to the house of incurables, should conclude with a strain of rudest contempt, evidently grounded in the distempered state of his own moral associations? Suppose, too, all this done without a single leading principle established or even announced, and without any one attempt at argumentative deduction, though the poet had presented a more than usual opportunity for it, by having previously made public his own principles of judgment in poetry, and supported them by a connected train of reasoning!

The office and duty of the poet is to select the most dignified as well as

"The gayest, happiest attitude of things."

The reverse, for in all cases a reverse is possible, is the appropriate business of burlesque and travesty, a predominant taste for which has been always deemed a mark of a low and degraded mind. When I was at Rome, among many other visits to the tomb of Julius II., I went thither once with a Prussian artist, a man of genius and great vivacity of feeling. As we were gazing on Michael Angelo's Moses, our conversation turned on the horns and beard of that stupendous statue; of the necessity of each to support the other; of the superhuman effect of the former, and the necessity of the existence of both to give a harmony and integrity both to the image and the feeling excited by it. Conceive them removed, and the statue would become *un-natural*, without being *super-natural*. We called to mind the horns of the

rising sun, and I repeated the noble passage from Taylor's *Holy Dying*. That horns were the emblem of power and sovereignty among the Eastern nations, and are still retained as such in Abyssinia; the Achelous of the ancient Greeks; 5 and the probable ideas and feelings that originally suggested the mixture of the human and the brute form in the figure by which they realized the idea of their mysterious Pan, as representing intelligence blended with a darker power, deeper, mightier, and more universal than the conscious 10 intellect of man, than intelligence; all these thoughts and recollections passed in procession before our minds. My companion, who possessed more than his share of the hatred which his countrymen bore to the French, had just observed to me, "A Frenchman, sir, is the only animal in the human 15 shape that by no possibility can lift itself up to religion or poetry;" when, lo! two French officers of distinction and rank entered the church! "Mark you," whispered the Prussian, "the first thing which those scoundrels will notice (for they will begin by instantly noticing the statue in parts, 20 without one moment's pause of admiration impressed by the whole) will be the horns and the beard. And the associations which they will immediately connect with them will be those of a he-goat and a cuckold." Never did man guess more luckily. Had he inherited a portion of the great legis- 25 lator's prophetic powers, whose statue we had been contemplating, he could scarcely have uttered words more coincident with the result; for even as he had said, so it came to pass.

In the *Excursion* the poet has introduced an old man, born in humble but not abject circumstances, who had en- 30 joyed more than useful advantages of education, both from books and from the more awful discipline of nature. This

person he represents as having been driven by the restlessness of fervid feelings and from a craving intellect to an itinerant life, and as having, in consequence, passed the larger portion of his time, from earliest manhood, in villages and hamlets from door to door :

5

“ A vagrant merchant bent beneath his load.”

Now whether this be a character appropriate to a lofty didactic poem, is perhaps questionable. It presents a fair subject for controversy ; and the question is to be determined by the congruity or incongruity of such a character with 10 what shall be proved to be the essential constituents of poetry.¹ But surely the critic who, passing by all the opportunities which such a mode of life would present to such a man ; all the advantages of the liberty of nature, of solitude, and of solitary thought ; all the varieties of places and sea- 15 sons, through which his track had lain, with all the varying imagery they bring with them ; and lastly, all the observations of men,

“ Their manners, their enjoyments and pursuits,
Their passions and their feelings,”

20

which the memory of these yearly journeys must have given and recalled to such a mind—the critic, I say, who from the multitude of possible associations should pass by all these in order to fix his attention exclusively on the pin-papers, and stay-tapes, which might have been among the wares of 25 his pack : this critic, in my opinion, cannot be thought to possess a much higher or much healthier state of moral feeling than the Frenchman above recorded.

CHAPTER XII.

The characteristic defects of Wordsworth's poetry, with the principles from which the judgment, that they are defects, is deduced — Their proportion to the beauties — For the greatest part characteristic of his theory only.

IF Mr. Wordsworth has set forth principles of poetry which his arguments are insufficient to support, let him and those who have adopted his sentiments be set right by the confutation of those arguments, and by the substitution of
5 more philosophical principles. And still let the due credit be given to the portion and importance of the truths which are blended with his theory : truths, the too exclusive attention to which had occasioned its errors, by tempting him to carry those truths beyond their proper limits. If his mis-
10 taken theory has at all influenced his poetic compositions, let the effects be pointed out, and the instances given. But let it likewise be shown how far the influence has acted ; whether diffusively, or only by starts ; whether the number and importance of the poems and passages thus infected be
15 great or trifling compared with the sound portion ; and lastly, whether they are inwoven into the texture of his works, or are loose and separable.¹ The result of such a trial would evince beyond a doubt, what it is high time to announce decisively and aloud, that the supposed character-
20 istics of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, whether admired or repro-

bated ; whether they are simplicity or simpleness ; faithful adherence to essential nature, or wilful selections from human nature of its meanest forms and under the least attractive associations : are as little the real characteristics of his poetry at large, as of his genius and the constitution of his mind.¹ 5

In a comparatively small number of poems, he chose to try an experiment ; and this experiment we will suppose to have failed. Yet even in these poems it is impossible not to perceive that the natural tendency of the poet's mind is to great objects and elevated conceptions.² The poem entitled 10 *Fidelity* is for the greater part written in language as unraised and naked as any perhaps in the two volumes. Yet take the following stanza and compare it with the preceding stanzas of the same poem :

“ There sometimes does a leaping fish 15
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer ;
The crags repeat the raven's croak
In symphony austere ;
Thither the rainbow comes — the cloud,
And mists that spread the flying shroud ; 20
And sunbeams ; and the sounding blast,
That if it could would hurry past,
But that enormous barrier holds it fast.”

Or compare the four last lines of the concluding stanza with the former half : 25

“ Yet proof was plain that since the day
On which the traveller thus had died,
The dog had watched about the spot,
Or by his master's side :
How nourished there for such long time
He knows who gave that love sublime,

*And gave that strength of feeling, great
Above all human estimate."*

Can any candid and intelligent mind hesitate in determining which of these best represents the tendency and native
5 character of the poet's genius? Will he not decide that the one was written because the poet would so write, and the other because he could not so entirely repress the force and grandeur of his mind, but that he must in some part or other of every composition write otherwise? In short, that his
10 only disease is the being out of his element; like the swan, that having amused himself, for a while, with crushing the weeds on the river's bank, soon returns to his own majestic movements on its reflecting and sustaining surface. Let it be observed, that I am here supposing the imagined judge,
15 to whom I appeal, to have already decided against the poet's theory, as far as it is different from the principles of the art, generally acknowledged.

I cannot here enter into a detailed examination of Mr. Wordsworth's works; but I will attempt to give the main
20 results of my own judgment, after an acquaintance of many years, and repeated perusals. And though, to appreciate the defects of a great mind it is necessary to understand previously its characteristic excellences, yet I have already expressed myself with sufficient fulness to preclude most of
25 the ill effects that might arise from my pursuing a contrary arrangement. I will therefore commence with what I deem the prominent defects of his poems hitherto published.

The first characteristic, though only occasional defect, which I appear to myself to find in these poems is the in-
30 constancy of the style. Under this name I refer to the sud-

den and unprepared transitions from lines or sentences of peculiar felicity (at all events striking and original) to a style, not only unimpassioned but undistinguished.¹ He sinks too often and too abruptly to that style which I should place in the second division of language, dividing it into the three species: first, that which is peculiar to poetry; second, that which is only proper in prose; and third, the neutral or common to both. There have been works, such as Cowley's *Essay on Cromwell*, in which prose and verse are intermixed, not (as in the *Consolation of Boetius*, or the *Argenis* of Barclay), by the insertion of poems supposed to have been spoken or composed on occasions previously related in prose, but by the poet passing from one to the other as the nature of the thoughts or his own feelings dictated. Yet this mode of composition does not satisfy a cultivated taste. There is something unpleasant in the being thus obliged to alternate states of feeling so dissimilar, and this too in a species of writing, the pleasure from which is in part derived from the preparation and previous expectation of the reader. A portion of that awkwardness is felt which hangs upon the introduction of songs in our modern comic operas; and to prevent which the judicious Metastasio (as to whose exquisite taste there can be no hesitation, whatever doubts may be entertained as to his poetic genius) uniformly placed the *aria* at the end of the scene, at the same time that he almost always raises and impassions the style of the recitative immediately preceding. Even in real life, the difference is great and evident between words used as the arbitrary marks of thought, our smooth market-coin of intercourse with the image and superscription worn out by currency, and those which convey pictures either borrowed from one

outward object to enliven and particularize some other ; or used allegorically to body forth the inward state of the person speaking ; or such as are at least the exponents of his peculiar turn and unusual extent of faculty. So much so, indeed, that in the social circles of private life we often find a striking use of the latter put a stop to the general flow of conversation, and by the excitement arising from concentrated attention produce a sort of damp and interruption for some minutes after. But in the perusal of works of literary art, we prepare ourselves for such language ; and the business of the writer, like that of a painter whose subject requires unusual splendour and prominence, is so to raise the lower and neutral tints, that what in a different style would be the commanding colours, are here used as the means of that gentle degradation requisite in order to produce the effect of a whole. Where this is not achieved in a poem, the metre merely reminds the reader of his claims in order to disappoint them ; and where this defect occurs frequently, his feelings are alternately startled by anticlimax and hyperclimax.

I refer the reader to the exquisite stanzas cited for another purpose from *The Blind Highland Boy* ; and then annex as being in my opinion instances of this disharmony in style the two following :

25 “ And one, the rarest, was a shell,
 Which he, poor child, had studied well :
 The shell of a green turtle, thin
 And hollow ; you might sit therein,
 It was so wide and deep.

30 “ Our Highland Boy oft visited
 The house which held this prize, and led

By choice or chance did thither come
 One day, when no one was at home,
 And found the door unbarred."

Or *The Emigrant Mother* :

" 'Tis gone forgotten, *let me do* 5
My best. There was a smile or two —
 I can remember them, I see
 The smiles worth all the world to me.
 Dear Baby, I must lay thee down.
 Thou troublest me with strange alarms! 10
 Smiles hast thou, sweet ones of thine own;
 I cannot keep thee in my arms,
 For they confound me: *as it is*,
 I have forgot those smiles of his! "

Or *To a Skylark* : 15

"Thou hast a nest, for thy love and thy rest,
 And though little troubled with sloth,
 Drunken lark! thou wouldst be loth
 To be such a traveller as I.
 Happy, happy liver! 20
With a soul as strong as a mountain river,
Pouring out praise to th' Almighty Giver!
 Joy and jollity be with us both,
 Hearing thee or else some other,
 As merry a brother, 25
 I on the earth will go plodding on
 By myself cheerfully till the day is done."

The incongruity which I appear to find in this passage is,
 that of the two noble lines in italics with the preceding and
 following. So *Resolution and Independence* : 30

"Close by a pond, upon the further side
 He stood alone; a minute's space I guess,

I watched him, he continuing motionless ;
 To the pool's further margin then I drew ;
 He being all the while before me full in view."

Compare this with the repetition of the same image, in
 the next stanza but two :

10 "And still as I drew near with gentle pace,
 Beside the little pond or moorish flood,
 Motionless as a cloud the old man stood :
 That heareth not the loud winds as they call,
 And moveth altogether, if it move at all."

Or lastly, the second of the three following stanzas, compared both with the first and the third :

15 "My former thoughts returned, the fear that kills;
 And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
 Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills;
 And mighty poets in their misery dead.
 But now, perplex'd by what the old man had said,
 My question eagerly did I renew,
 How is it that you live, and what is it you do?
 20 He with a smile did then his tale repeat ;
 And said, that, gathering leeches far and wide,
 He travelled : stirring thus about his feet
 The waters of the ponds where they abide.
 'Once I could meet with them on every side,
 25 But they have dwindled long by slow decay ;
 Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.'

30 "While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
 The old man's shape, and speech, all troubled me :
 In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
 About the weary moors continually,
 Wandering about alone and silently."

Indeed, this fine poem is especially characteristic of the author. There is scarce a defect or excellence in his writings of which it would not present a specimen. But it would be unjust not to repeat that this defect is only occasional. From a careful re-perusal of the two volumes of 5 poems, I doubt whether the objectionable passages would amount in the whole to one hundred lines; not the eighth part of the number of pages. In *The Excursion* the feeling of incongruity is seldom excited by the diction of any passage considered in itself, but by the sudden superiority of 10 some other passage forming the context.

The second defect I could generalize with tolerable accuracy, if the reader will pardon an uncouth and new-coined word. There is, I should say, not seldom a *matter-of-factness* in certain poems. This may be divided into, first, a 15 laborious minuteness and fidelity in the representation of objects, and their positions, as they appeared to the poet himself; secondly, the insertion of accidental circumstances, in order to the full explanation of his living characters, their dispositions and actions: which circumstances might be 20 necessary to establish the probability of a statement in real life, where nothing is taken for granted by the hearer, but appear superfluous in poetry, where the reader is willing to believe for his own sake.¹ To this accidentality, I object, as contravening the essence of poetry, which Aristotle pro- 25 nounces to be σπουδαιότατον καὶ φιλοσοφώτατον γένος,² the most intense, weighty, and philosophical product of human art; adding, as the reason, that it is the most catholic and abstract. The following passage from Davenant's prefatory letter to Hobbes well expresses this truth: "When I con- 30 sidered the actions which I meant to describe (those infer-

ring the persons) I was again persuaded rather to choose those of a former age than the present ; and in a century so far removed as might preserve me from their improper examinations, who know not the requisites of a poem, nor
 5 how much pleasure they lose (and even the pleasures of heroic poesy are not unprofitable) who take away the liberty of a poet, and fetter his feet in the shackles of an historian. For why should a poet doubt in story to mend the intrigues of fortune by more delightful conveyances of
 10 probable fictions, because austere historians have entered into bond to truth? An obligation, which were in poets as foolish and unnecessary, as is the bondage of false martyrs, who lie in chains for a mistaken opinion. *But by this I would imply, that truth, narrative and past, is the idol of*
 15 *historians (who worship a dead thing) and truth operative, and by effects continually alive, is the mistress of poets, who hath not her existence in matter, but in reason.*

For this minute accuracy in the painting of local imagery, the lines in *The Excursion*, Book iii., may be taken, if
 20 not as a striking instance yet as an illustration of my meaning.¹ It must be some strong motive (as, for instance, that the description was necessary to the intelligibility of the tale) which could induce me to describe in a number of verses, what a draftsman could present to the eye with
 25 incomparably greater satisfaction by half a dozen strokes of his pencil, or the painter with as many touches of his brush. Such descriptions too often occasion in the mind of a reader, who is determined to understand his author, a feeling of labour, not very dissimilar to that with which he
 30 would construct a diagram, line by line, for a long geometrical proposition. It seems to be like taking the pieces of

a dissected map out of its box. We first look at one part and then at another, then join and dove-tail them; and when the successive acts of attention have been completed, there is a retrogressive effort of mind to behold it as a whole. The poet should paint to the imagination, not to the fancy; 5 and I know no happier case to exemplify the distinction between these two faculties. Masterpieces of the former mode of poetic painting abound in the writings of Milton,

“The fig-tree, not that kind for fruit renown’d,
But such as at this day to Indians known 10
In Malabar or Decan, spreads her arms
Branching so broad and long, that in the ground
The bended twigs take root, *and daughters grow*
About a mother-tree, a pillar’d shade
High over-arched, and ECHOING WALKS BETWEEN: 15
There oft the Indian Herdsman, shunning heat,
Shelters in cool, and tends his pasturing herds
*At loopholes cut through thickest shade.”*¹

This is creation rather than painting, or if painting, yet such and with such co-presence of the whole picture flashed 20 at once upon the eye, as the sun paints in a camera obscura. But the poet must likewise understand and command what Bacon calls the *vestigia communia* of the senses, the latency of all in each, and more especially as by a magical *penna duplex*, the excitement of vision by sound and the expo- 25 nents of sound. Thus, “The echoing walks between,” may be almost said to reverse the fable in tradition of the head of Memnon, in the Egyptian statue. Such may be deservedly entitled the creative words in the world of imagination.²

The second division respects an apparent minute adher-

ence to matter-of-fact in character and incidents; a biographical attention to probability, and an anxiety of explanation and retrospect. Under this head I shall deliver, with no feigned diffidence, the results of my best reflection
5 on the great point of controversy between Mr. Wordsworth and his objectors, namely, on the choice of his characters.¹ I have already declared, and, I trust, justified, my utter dissent from the mode of argument which his critics have hitherto employed. To their question, why did you choose such
10 a character, or a character from such a rank of life? the poet might, in my opinion, fairly retort: why, with the conception of my character, did you make wilful choice of mean or ludicrous associations not furnished by me, but supplied from your own sickly and fastidious feelings? How was it,
15 indeed, probable, that such arguments could have any weight with an author, whose plan, whose guiding principle, and main object it was to attack and subdue that state of association, which leads us to place the chief value on those things on which man differs from man, and to forget or disregard
20 the high dignities which belong to human nature, the sense and the feeling which may be, and ought to be, found in all ranks?² The feelings with which, as Christians, we contemplate a mixed congregation rising or kneeling before their common Maker, Mr. Wordsworth would have us entertain
25 at all times, as men, and as readers; and by the excitement of this lofty, yet prideless impartiality in poetry, he might hope to have encouraged its continuance in real life. The praise of good men be his! In real life, and I trust, even in my imagination, I honour a virtuous and wise man, without
30 reference to the presence or absence of artificial advantages. Whether in the person of an armed baron, a laurelled

bard, or of an old pedlar, or still older leech-gatherer, the same qualities of head and heart must claim the same reverence. And even in poetry, I am not conscious that I have ever suffered my feelings to be disturbed or offended by any thoughts or images which the poet himself has not presented. 5

But yet I object, nevertheless, and for the following reasons. First, because the object in view, as an immediate object, belongs to the moral philosopher, and would be pursued, not only more appropriately, but in my opinion with far greater probability of success, in sermons or moral essays, than in an elevated poem. It seems, indeed, to destroy the main fundamental distinction, not only between a poem and prose, but even between philosophy and works of fiction, inasmuch as it proposes truth for its immediate object instead of pleasure. Now, till the blessed time shall come, when truth itself shall be pleasure, and both shall be so united as to be distinguishable in words only, not in feeling, it will remain the poet's office to proceed upon that state of association which actually exists as general; instead of attempting first to make it what it ought to be, and then to let the pleasure follow.¹ But here is unfortunately a small *Hysteron-Proteron*.² For the communication of pleasure is the introductory means by which alone the poet must expect to moralize his readers. Secondly: though I were to admit, for a moment, this argument to be groundless; yet how is the moral effect to be produced, by merely attaching the name of some low profession to powers which are least likely, and to qualities which are assuredly not more likely, to be found in it? The poet, speaking in his own person, may at once delight and improve us by sentiments which teach us 30

of almost every man, in a country where almost every man is instructed to read and write ; and how restless, how difficultly hidden, the powers of genius are, and yet find even in situations the most favourable, according to Mr. Wordsworth, for the formation of a pure and poetic language — in 5 situations which ensure familiarity with the grandest objects of the imagination — but one, Burns, among the shepherds of Scotland, and not a single poet of humble life among those of English lakes and mountains, I conclude, that Poetic Genius is not only a very delicate, but a very rare 10 plant.

But be this as it may, the feelings with which

“ I think of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul, that perish'd in his pride :
Of Burns, that walk'd in glory and in joy 15
Behind his plough upon the mountain-side,”¹

are widely different from those with which I should read a poem, where the author, having occasion for the character of a poet and a philosopher in the fable of his narration, had chosen to make him a chimney-sweeper ; and then, in 20 order to remove all doubts on the subject, had invented an account of his birth, parentage, and education, with all the strange and fortunate accidents which had concurred in making him at once poet, philosopher, and sweep ! Nothing but biography can justify this. If it be admissible even 25 in a novel, it must be one in the manner of De Foe's, that were meant to pass for histories, not in the manner of Fielding's : in the life of *Moll Flanders*, or *Colonel Jack*, not in a *Tom Jones*, or even a *Joseph Andrews*. Much less, then,

can it be legitimately introduced in a poem, the characters of which, amid the strongest individualization, must still remain representative. The precepts of Horace, on this point, are grounded on the nature both of poetry and of the human mind.¹ They are not more peremptory, than wise and prudent. For, in the first place, a deviation from them perplexes the reader's feelings, and all the circumstances which are feigned in order to make such accidents less improbable, divide and disquiet his faith, rather than aid and support it. Spite of all attempts fiction will appear, and unfortunately not as fictitious but as false. The reader not only knows that the sentiments and the language are the poet's own, and his own too in his artificial character, as poet; but by the fruitless endeavours to make him think the contrary, he is not even suffered to forget it. The effect is similar to that produced by an epic poet, when the fable and characters are derived from Scripture history, as in the *Messiah* of Klopstock, or in Cumberland's *Calvary*: and not merely suggested by it as in the *Paradise Lost* of Milton. That illusion, contradistinguished from delusion, that negative faith, which simply permits the images presented to work by their own force, without either denial or affirmation of their real existence by the judgment, is rendered impossible by their immediate neighbourhood to words and facts of known and absolute truth. A faith which transcends even historic belief, must absolutely put out this mere poetic Analogon of faith, as the summer sun is said to extinguish our household fires, when it shines full upon them. What would otherwise have been yielded to as pleasing fiction, is repelled as revolting falsehood. The effect produced in this latter case by the solemn belief of the reader, is in a less

degree brought about in the instances to which I have been objecting, by the baffled attempts of the author to make him believe.

Add to all the foregoing the seeming uselessness both of the project and of the anecdotes from which it is to derive support. Is there one word, for instance, attributed to the pedlar in *The Excursion*, characteristic of a pedlar? One sentiment, that might not more plausibly, even without the aid of any previous explanation, have proceeded from any wise and beneficent old man of a rank or profession in which the language of learning and refinement are naturally to be expected? Need the rank have been at all particularized, where nothing follows which the knowledge of that rank is to explain or illustrate? When on the contrary this information renders the man's language, feelings, sentiments, and information a riddle, which must itself be solved by episodes of anecdote? Finally, when this and this alone could have induced a genuine poet to inweave in a poem of the loftiest style, and on subjects the loftiest and of the most universal interest, such minute matters of fact, not unlike those furnished for the obituary of a magazine by the friends of some obscure "ornament of society lately deceased" in some obscure town, as

"Among the hills of Athol he was born.
There on a small hereditary farm,
An unproductive slip of rugged ground,
His Father dwelt ; and died in poverty :
While he, whose lowly fortune I retrace,
The youngest of three sons, was yet a babe,
A little one — unconscious of their loss.
But ere he had outgrown his infant days
His widowed mother, for a second mate,

25

30

Espoused the teacher of the Village School ;
 Who on her offspring zealously bestowed
 Needful instruction.

5 “From his sixth year, the Boy of whom I speak,
 In summer tended cattle on the hills ;
 But through the inclement and the perilous days
 Of long-continuing winter, he repaired
 To his step-father’s school,”¹ &c.

For all the admirable passages interposed in this narration,
 10 might, with trifling alterations, have been far more appropriately, and with far greater verisimilitude, told of a poet in the character of a poet ;² and without incurring another defect which I shall now mention, and a sufficient illustration of which will have been here anticipated.

15 Third ; an undue predilection for the dramatic form³ in certain poems, from which one or other of two evils result. Either the thoughts and diction are different from that of the poet, and then there arises an incongruity of style ; or they are the same and indistinguishable, and then it presents a
 20 species of ventriloquism, where two are represented as talking, while in truth one man only speaks.

The fourth class of defects is closely connected with the former ; but yet are such as arise likewise from an intensity of feeling disproportionate to such knowledge and value of
 25 the objects described, as can be fairly anticipated of men in general, even of the most cultivated classes ; and with which therefore few only, and those few particularly circumstanced, can be supposed to sympathize : in this class, I comprise occasional prolixity, repetition, and an eddying instead of
 30 progression of thought. As instances, see *The Anecdote for*

Fathers, and the first eighty lines of the Sixth Book of *The Excursion*.

Fifth and last ; thoughts and images too great for the subject. This is an approximation to what might be called mental bombast, as distinguished from verbal : for, as in the 5 latter there is a disproportion of the expressions to the thoughts, so in this there is a disproportion of thought to the circumstance and occasion.¹ This, by-the-by, is a fault of which none but a man of genius is capable. It is the awkwardness and strength of Hercules with the distaff of 10 Omphale.

It is a well-known fact, that bright colours in motion both make and leave the strongest impressions on the eye. Nothing is more likely too, than that a vivid image or visual spectrum, thus originated, may become the link of 15 association in recalling the feelings and images that had accompanied the original impression. But if we describe this in such lines, as

“ They flash upon that inward eye,
Which is the bliss of solitude ! ”²

20

in what words shall we describe the joy of retrospection, when the images and virtuous actions of a whole well-spent life pass before that conscience which is indeed the inward eye : which is indeed “ the bliss of solitude ” ? Assuredly we seem to sink most abruptly, not to say burlesquely, and 25 almost as in a medley, from this couplet to

“ And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.”³

The second is from *The Gipsies*, where the poet having gone out for a day's tour of pleasure, meets early in the 30

morning with a knot of Gipsies, who had pitched their blanket-tents and straw beds, together with their children and asses, in some field by the roadside. At the close of the day on his return our tourist found them in the same
5 place. "Twelve hours," says he,

"Twelve hours, twelve bounteous hours, are gone while I
Have been a traveller under open sky,
Much witnessing of change and cheer,
Yet as I left I find them here!"

10 Whereat the poet, without seeming to reflect that the poor tawny wanderers might probably have been tramping for weeks together through road and lane, over moor and mountain, and consequently must have been right glad to rest themselves, their children and cattle, for one whole
15 day; and overlooking the obvious truth, that such repose might be quite as necessary for them, as a walk of the same continuance was pleasing or healthful for the more fortunate poet; expresses his indignation in a series of lines, the diction and imagery of which would have been rather above,
20 than below the mark, had they been applied to the immense empire of China improgressive for thirty centuries: †

"The weary Sun betook himself to rest, —
Then issued Vesper from the fulgent west,
Outshining, like a visible God,
25 The glorious path in which he trod!
And now ascending, after one dark hour,
And one night's diminution of her power,
Behold the mighty Moon! this way
She looks, as if at them — but they
30 Regard not her: — oh, better wrong and strife,
Better vain deeds or evil than such life!

The silent Heavens have goings on :
 The stars have tasks ! — but these have none ! ”

The last instance of this defect (for I know no other than these already cited) is from *The Ode*, where, speaking of a child, “a six years’ darling of a pigmy size,” he thus 5 addresses him :

“Thou best philosopher who yet dost keep
 Thy heritage ! Thou eye among the blind,
 That, deaf and silent, read’st the eternal deep —
 Haunted for ever by the Eternal Mind — 10
 Mighty Prophet ! Seer blest !
 On whom those truths do rest,
 Which we are toiling all our lives to find !
 Thou, over whom thy immortality
 Broods like the day, a master o’er the slave, 15
 A presence which is not to be put by ! ”

Now here, not to stop at the daring spirit of metaphor which connects the epithets “deaf and silent,” with the apostrophized *eye* : or (if we are to refer it to the preceding word, philosopher) the faulty and equivocal syntax of the 20 passage ; and without examining the propriety of making a “master *brood* o’er a slave,” or the *day* brood *at all* ; we will merely ask, What does all this mean ? In what sense is a child of that age a *philosopher* ? In what sense does he *read* “the eternal deep” ? In what sense is he declared to 25 be “*for ever haunted*” by the Supreme Being ? or so inspired as to deserve the splendid titles of a *mighty prophet*, a *blessed seer* ? By reflection ? by knowledge ? by conscious intuition ? or by *any* form or modification of consciousness ? These would be tidings indeed ; but such as would presup- 30 pose an immediate revelation to the inspired communicator,

and require miracles to authenticate his inspiration. Children at this age give us no such information of themselves : and at what time were we dipped in the Lethe which has produced such utter oblivion of a state so godlike? There
 5 are many of us that still possess some remembrances, more or less distinct, respecting ourselves at six years old ; pity that the worthless straws only should float, while treasures, compared with which all the mines of Golconda and Mexico were but straws, should be absorbed by some unknown gulf
 10 into some unknown abyss.¹

But if this be too wild and exorbitant to be suspected as having been the poet's meaning ; if these mysterious gifts, faculties, and operations are not accompanied with consciousness ; who else is conscious of them ? or how can it
 15 be called the child, if it be no part of the child's conscious being ? For aught I know, the thinking spirit within me may be substantially one with the principle of life, and of vital operation. For aught I know, it may be employed as a secondary agent in the marvellous organization and organic
 20 movements of my body. But, surely, it would be strange language to say, that I construct my heart ! or that I propel the finer influences through my nerves ! or that I compress my brain, and draw the curtains of sleep round my own eyes ! Spinoza and Behmen were on different systems both
 25 Pantheists ; and among the ancients there were philosophers, teachers of the EN KAI HAN,² who not only taught that God was All, but that this All constituted God. Yet not even these would confound the *part, as* a part, with the Whole, *as* the whole. Nay, in no system is the distinction between
 30 the individual and God, between the modification and the one only substance, more sharply drawn than in that of

Spinoza. Jacobi, indeed, relates of Lessing, that after a conversation with him at the house of the poet Gleim (the Tyrtæus and Anacreon of the German Parnassus), in which conversation Lessing had avowed privately to Jacobi his reluctance to admit any *personal* existence of the Supreme Being, or the *possibility* of personality except in a finite Intellect, and while they were sitting at table, a shower of rain came on unexpectedly. Gleim expressed his regret at the circumstance, because they had meant to drink their wine in the garden : upon which Lessing, in one of his half-earnest, half-joking moods, nodded to Jacobi, and said, "It is *I*, perhaps, that am doing *that*," *i.e.*, *raining!* and Jacobi answered, "Or perhaps I:" Gleim contented himself with staring at them both, without asking for any explanation.¹

15

So with regard to this passage. In what sense can the magnificent attributes, above quoted, be appropriated to a *child*, which would not make them equally suitable to a *bee*, or a *dog*, or a *field of corn*; or even to a ship, or to the wind and waves that propel it? The omnipresent Spirit works equally in *them* as in the child; and the child is equally unconscious of it as they. It cannot surely be, that the four lines, immediately following, are to contain the explanation?

"To whom the grave
Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
Of day or the warm light,
A place of thought where we in waiting lie."

25

Surely, it cannot be that this wonder-rousing apostrophe is but a comment on the little poem of *We are Seven?* that the whole meaning of the passage is reducible to the

30

assertion that a child, who, by-the-by, at six years old would have been better instructed in most Christian families, has no other notion of death than that of lying in a dark, cold place? And still, I hope, not as in a place of thought! not
5 the frightful notion of lying awake in his grave! The analogy between death and sleep is too simple, too natural, to render so horrible a belief possible for children; even had they not been in the habit, as all Christian children are, of hearing the latter term used to express the former. But if
10 the child's belief be only, that "he is not dead, but sleepeth": wherein does it differ from that of his father and mother, or any other adult or instructed person? To form an idea of a thing's becoming nothing; or of nothing becoming a thing; is impossible to all finite beings alike, of whatever
15 age, and however educated or uneducated. Thus it is with splendid paradoxes in general. If the words are taken in the common sense, they convey an absurdity; and if, in contempt of dictionaries and custom, they are so interpreted as to avoid the absurdity, the meaning dwindles into some
20 bald truism. Thus you must at once understand the words contrary to their common import, in order to arrive at any sense; and according to their common import, if you are to receive from them any feeling of sublimity or admiration.¹

Though the instances of this defect in Mr. Wordsworth's
25 poems are so few, that for themselves it would have been scarcely just to attract the reader's attention toward them; yet I have dwelt on it, and perhaps the more for this very reason. For being so very few, they cannot sensibly detract from the reputation of an author, who is even characterized
30 by the number of profound truths in his writings, which will stand the severest analysis; and yet few as they are, they

are exactly those passages which his blind admirers would be most likely, and best able, to imitate. But Wordsworth, where he is indeed Wordsworth, may be mimicked by copyists, he may be plundered by plagiarists ; but he cannot be imitated except by those who are not born to be imi- 5 tators. For without his depth of feeling and his imaginative power, his sense would want its vital warmth and peculiarity ; and without his strong sense, his mysticism would become sickly — mere fog, and dimness !

To these defects which, as appears by the extracts, are 10 only occasional, I may oppose with far less fear of encountering the dissent of any candid and intelligent reader, the following (for the most part correspondent) excellences. First, an austere purity of language both grammatically and logically ; in short a perfect appropriateness of the words to 15 the meaning.¹ Of how high value I deem this, and how particularly estimable I hold the example at the present day, has been already stated : and in part too the reasons on which I ground both the moral and intellectual importance of habituating ourselves to a strict accuracy of expression. 20 It is noticeable, how limited an acquaintance with the masterpieces of art will suffice to form a correct and even a sensitive taste, where none but masterpieces have been seen and admired : while on the other hand, the most correct notions, and the widest acquaintance with the works of 25 excellence of all ages and countries, will not perfectly secure us against the contagious familiarity with the far more numerous offspring of tastelessness or of a perverted taste. If this be the case, as it notoriously is, with the arts of music and painting, much more difficult will it be, to avoid 30 the infection of multiplied and daily examples in the prac-

tice of an art, which uses words, and words only, as its instruments. In poetry, in which every line, every phrase, may pass the ordeal of deliberation and deliberate choice, it is possible, and barely possible, to attain that *ultimatum* 5 which I have ventured to propose as the infallible test of a blameless style, namely, its untranslatableness in words of the same language without injury to the meaning. Be it observed, however, that I include in the meaning of a word not only its correspondent object, but likewise all the asso- 10 ciations which it recalls. For language is framed to convey not the object alone, but likewise the character, mood, and intentions of the person who is representing it. In poetry it is practicable to preserve the diction uncorrupted by the affectations and misappropriations, which promiscuous author- 15 ship, and reading not promiscuous only because it is disproportionally most conversant with the compositions of the day, have rendered general. Yet even to the poet, composing in his own province, it is an arduous work : and as the result and pledge of a watchful good sense, of fine and 20 luminous distinction, and of complete self-possession, may justly claim all the honour which belongs to an attainment equally difficult and valuable, and the more valuable for being rare. It is at all times the proper food of the understanding ; but in an age of corrupt eloquence it is both 25 food and antidote.

In prose I doubt whether it be even possible to preserve our style wholly unalloyed by the vicious phraseology which meets us everywhere, from the sermon to the newspaper, from the harangue of the legislator to the speech from the 30 convivial chair, announcing a toast or sentiment. Our chains rattle, even while we are complaining of them. The

poems of Boetius rise high in our estimation when we compare them with those of his contemporaries, as Sidonius Apollinaris, &c. They might even be referred to a purer age, but that the prose in which they are set, as jewels in a crown of lead or iron, betrays the true age of the writer. 5 Much however may be effected by education. I believe not only from grounds of reason, but from having in great measure assured myself of the fact by actual though limited experience, that to a youth led from his first boyhood to investigate the meaning of every word and the reason of its 10 choice and position, logic presents itself as an old acquaintance under new names.

On some future occasion, more especially demanding such disquisition, I shall attempt to prove the close connection between veracity and habits of mental accuracy; the beneficial after-effects of verbal precision in the preclusion of 15 fanaticism, which masters the feelings more especially by indistinct watch-words; and to display the advantages which language alone, at least which language with incomparably greater ease and certainty than any other means, presents 20 to the instructor of impressing modes of intellectual energy so constantly, so imperceptibly, and as it were by such elements and atoms, as to secure in due time the formation of a second nature. When we reflect, that the cultivation of the judgment is a positive command of the moral law, since 25 the reason can give the principle alone, and the conscience bears witness only to the motive, while the application and effects must depend on the judgment: when we consider, that the greater part of our success and comfort in life depends on distinguishing the similar from the same, that 30 which is peculiar in each thing from that which it has in

common with others, so as still to select the most probable, instead of the merely possible or positively unfit, we shall learn to value earnestly and with a practical seriousness, a mean, already prepared for us by nature and society, of
5 teaching the young mind to think well and wisely by the same unremembered process and with the same never forgotten results, as those by which it is taught to speak and converse. Now how much warmer the interest is, how much more genial the feelings of reality and practicability, and
10 thence how much stronger the impulses to imitation are, which a contemporary writer, and especially a contemporary poet, excites in youth and commencing manhood, has been treated of in the early pages of the sketches. I have only
15 to add, that all the praise which is due to the exertion of such influence for a purpose so important, joined with that which must be claimed for the infrequency of the same excellence in the same perfection, belongs in full right to Mr. Wordsworth. I am far however from denying that we
20 have poets whose general style possesses the same excellence, as Mr. Moore, Lord Byron, Mr. Bowles, and in all his later and more important works our laurel-honouring Laureate. But there are none, in whose works I do not appear to myself to find more exceptions than in those of Wordsworth. Quotations or specimens would here be wholly out
25 of place, and must be left for the critic who doubts and would invalidate the justice of this eulogy so applied.

The second characteristic excellence of Mr. Wordsworth's works is: a correspondent weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, — won, not from books, but — from the
30 poet's own meditative observation.¹ They are fresh, and have the dew upon them. His muse, at least when in her

strength of wing, and when she hovers aloft in her proper element,

“ Makes audible a linked lay of truth,
Of truth profound a sweet continuous lay,
Not learnt, but native, her own natural notes ! ” ¹ 5

Even throughout his smaller poems there is scarcely one, which is not rendered valuable by some just and original reflection.

See *Star Gazers* : or the two following passages in one of his humblest compositions : 10

“ O Reader ! had you in your mind
Such stores as silent thought can bring,
O gentle Reader ! you would find
A tale in everything.”

And 15

“ I have heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning :
Alas ! the gratitude of men
Has oftener left me mourning.” ²

Or in a still higher strain the six beautiful quatrains, in *The Fountain* :

“ Thus fares it still in our decay :
And yet the wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind. 25

“ The Blackbird in the summer trees,
The Lark upon the hill,
Let loose their carols when they please,
Are quiet when they will.

“ With Nature never do *they* wage
 A foolish strife : they see
 A happy youth, and their old age
 Is beautiful and free !

5 “ But we are pressed by heavy laws
 And often, glad no more,
 We wear a face of joy, because
 We have been glad of yore.

10 “ If there is one who need bemoan
 His kindred laid in earth,
 The household hearts that were his own
 It is the man of mirth.

15 “ My days, my Friend, are almost gone,
 My life has been approved,
 And many love me ; but by none
 Am I enough beloved.”

Or the Sonnet on Buonaparte ; or finally (for a volume would scarce suffice to exhaust the instances), the last stanza of the poem on *The Withered Celandine* :

20 “ To be a prodigal’s favourite — then, worse truth,
 A miser’s pensioner — behold our lot !
 O man ! that from thy fair and shining youth
 Age might but take the things youth needed not.”

Both in respect of this and of the former excellence, Mr.
 25 Wordsworth strikingly resembles Samuel Daniel, one of the
 golden writers of our golden Elizabethan age, now most
 causelessly neglected : Samuel Daniel, whose diction bears
 no mark of time, no distinction of age, which has been, and
 as long as our language shall last will be, so far the language
 30 of the to-day and for ever, as that it is more intelligible to

us, than the transitory fashions of our own particular age.¹
 A similar praise is due to his sentiments. No frequency of
 perusal can deprive them of their freshness. For though
 they are brought into the full daylight of every reader's
 comprehension, yet are they drawn up from depths which 5
 few in any age are privileged to visit, into which few in any
 age have courage or inclination to descend. If Mr. Words-
 worth is not equally with Daniel alike intelligible to all
 readers of average understanding in all passages of his
 works, the comparative difficulty does not arise from the 10
 greater impurity of the ore, but from the nature and uses of
 the metal. A poem is not necessarily obscure because it
 does not aim to be popular. It is enough, if a work be
 perspicuous to those for whom it is written, and

“Fit audience let me find, though few.” 15

To the *Ode on the Imitations of Immortality from Recollections of early Childhood* the poet might have prefixed the lines which Dante addresses to one of his own *Canzoni*—

“Canzone, i' credo, che saranno radi 20
 Color che tua ragione intendan bene:
 Tanto lor sei faticoso ed alto.”

“O lyric song, there will be few, think I,
 Who may thy import understand aright:
 Thou art for *them* so arduous and so high!” 25

But the ode was intended for such readers only as had
 been accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their in-
 most nature, to venture at times into the twilight realms of
 consciousness, and to feel a deep interest in modes of in-
 most being, to which they know that the attributes of time 30

and space are inapplicable and alien, but which yet cannot be conveyed, save in symbols of time and space. For such readers the sense is sufficiently plain, and they will be as little disposed to charge Mr. Wordsworth with believing the
 5 Platonic pre-existence in the ordinary interpretation of the words, as I am to believe, that Plato himself ever meant or taught it :¹

Πολλά δι' ὑπ' ἀγκῶ

— νος ὠκέα βέλη

10 Ἐνδον ἐντὶ φαρέτρας

Φωνᾶντα συνετοῖσιν· ἔς

Δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἐρμηνέων

Χατίζει. Σοφὸς δὲ πολ-

— λα εἰδὼς φυᾶ

15 Μαθόντες δὲ λάβροι

Παγγλωσσίᾳ, κόρακες ὧς

Ἄκραντα γαρύετον

Διὸς πρὸς ὄρνιχα θεῖον²

Third (and wherein he soars far above Daniel) : the
 20 sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs : the frequent *curiosa felicitas* of his diction,³ of which I need not here give specimens, having anticipated them in a preceding page. This beauty, and as eminently characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry, his rudest assailants
 25 have felt themselves compelled to acknowledge and admire.

Fourth : the perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions as taken immediately from nature, and proving a long and genial intimacy with the very spirit which gives the physiognomic expression to all the works of nature.
 30 Like a green field reflected in a calm and perfectly transparent lake, the image is distinguished from the reality only by its greater softness and lustre. Like the moisture or

the polish on a pebble, genius neither distorts nor false-colours its objects; but on the contrary brings out many a vein and many a tint, which escape the eye of common observation, thus raising to the rank of gems what had been often kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveller on the dusty highroad of custom.

Let me refer to the whole description of skating in *Influence of Natural Objects*, especially to the lines

“So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle: with the din
Meanwhile the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while the distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.”¹

Or to the poem on *The Green Linnet*. What can be more accurate yet more lovely than the two concluding stanzas?

“Upon yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstacies,
Yet seeming still to hover,
There! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings
That cover him all over.
While thus before my eyes he gleams,
A brother of the leaves he seems:
When in a moment forth he teems
His little song in gushes:
As if it pleased him to disdain

And mock the form which he did feign,
While he was dancing with the train
Of leaves among the bushes."

Or the description of the blue-cap, and of the noontide
5 silence, in the poem called *The Kitten and the Falling Leaves*; or the poem to *The Cuckoo*; or, lastly, though I might multiply the references to ten times the number, to the poem so completely Wordsworth's commencing

"Three years she grew in sun and shower."

10 Fifth: a meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility; a sympathy with man as man; the sympathy indeed of a contemplator, rather than a fellow-sufferer or co-mate (spectator, *haud particeps*), but of a contemplator, from whose view no difference of rank conceals
15 the sameness of the nature; no injuries of wind or weather, of toil, or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine.¹ The superscription and the image of the Creator still remain legible to him under the dark lines, with which guilt or calamity had cancelled or cross-barred it. Here
20 the man and the poet lose and find themselves in each other, the one as glorified, the latter as substantiated. In this mild and philosophic pathos, Wordsworth appears to me without a compeer. Such he *is*: so he *writes*. See
" 'Tis said that some have died for love," or that most af-
25 fecting composition, the *Affliction of Margaret*, which no mother, and if I may judge by my own experience, no parent can read without a tear. Or turn to that genuine lyric, in the former edition, entitled the *Mad Mother*, of which I cannot refrain from quoting two of the stanzas,
30 both of them for their pathos, and the former for the fine

transition in the two concluding lines of the stanza, so expressive of that deranged state, in which from the increased sensibility the sufferer's attention is abruptly drawn off by every trifle, and in the same instant plucked back again by the one despotic thought, and bringing home with it, by the 5
blending, fusing power of Imagination and Passion, the alien object to which it had been so abruptly diverted, no longer an alien but an ally and an inmate.

“Suck, little babe, oh suck again!
It cools my blood, it cools my brain: 10
Thy lips, I feel them, baby! they
Draw from my heart the pain away.
Oh! press me with thy little hand;
It loosens something at my chest;
About that tight and deadly band 15
I feel thy little fingers prest.
The breeze I see is in the tree!
It comes to cool my babe and me.
Thy father cares not for my breast,
’Tis thine, sweet baby, there to rest. 20
’Tis all thine own!—and, if its hue
Be changed, that was so fair to view,
’Tis fair enough for thee, my dove!
My beauty, little child, is flown,
But thou wilt live with me in love, 25
And what if my poor cheek be brown
’Tis well for me, thou canst not see
How pale and wan it else would be.”

Lastly, and pre-eminently, I challenge for this poet the gift of Imagination in the highest and strictest sense of the 30
word. In the play of fancy, Wordsworth, to my feelings, is not always graceful, and sometimes recondite. The likeness is occasionally too strange, or demands too peculiar

a point of view, or is such as appears the creature of pre-determined research, rather than spontaneous presentation. Indeed his fancy seldom displays itself as mere and unmodified fancy. But in imaginative power, he stands nearest
 5 of all modern writers to Shakespeare and Milton; and yet in a kind perfectly unborrowed and his own.¹ To employ his own words, which are at once an instance and an illustration, he does indeed to all thoughts and to all objects —

————— “add the gleam,
 10 The light that never was on sea or land,
 .The consecration, and the poet’s dream.”²

I shall select a few examples as most obviously manifesting this faculty; but if I should ever be fortunate enough to render my analysis of imagination, its origin and characters, thoroughly intelligible to the reader, he will scarcely
 15 open on a page of this poet’s works without recognizing, more or less, the presence and the influences of this faculty.

From the poem on the *Yew Trees* :

“But worthier still of note
 20 Are those fraternal four of Borrowdale,
 Joined in one solemn and capacious grove;
 Huge trunks! — and each particular trunk a growth
 Of intertwined fibres serpentine
 Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved, —
 25 Not uninformed with phantasy, and looks
 That threaten the profane; — a pillared shade,
 Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,
 By sheddings from the pinal umbrage tinged
 Perennially — beneath whose sable roof
 30 Of boughs, as if for festal purpose decked
 With unrejoicing berries, ghostly shapes

May meet at noontide — Fear and trembling Hope,
 Silence and Foresight — Death, the skeleton,
 And Time, the shadow — there to celebrate,
 As in a natural temple scattered o'er
 With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
 United worship; or in mute repose
 To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
 Murmuring from Glanamara's inmost caves."

5

The effect of the old man's figure in the poem of *Resolu-
 tion and Independence* :

10

"While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
 The old man's shape, and speech, all troubled me :
 In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
 About the weary moors continually,
 Wandering about alone and silently."

15

Or the 8th, 9th, 19th, 26th, 31st, and 33rd, in the collec-
 tion of *Miscellaneous Sonnets* — the Sonnet on the subjugation
 of Switzerland, or the last ode, from which I especially
 select the two following stanzas or paragraphs. (*On the
 Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early
 Childhood.*)

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
 The soul that rises with us, our life's star
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,

And cometh from afar.

25

Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God who is our home :

Heaven lies about us in our infancy !

30

Shades of the prison-house begin to close

Upon the growing boy ;

But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,

He sees it in his joy !

The youth who daily further from the east
 Must travel, still is nature's priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;
 5 At length the man perceives it die away,
 And fade into the light of common day."

And of the same ode :

10 "O joy that in our embers
 Is something that doth live,
 That nature yet remembers
 What was so fugitive !
 The thought of our past years in me doth breed
 Perpetual benedictions : not indeed
 For that which is most worthy to be blest;
 15 Delight and liberty, the simple creed
 Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
 With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast : —
 Not for these I raise
 The song of thanks and praise;
 20 But for those obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things,
 Fallings from us, vanishings;
 Blank misgivings of a creature
 Moving about in worlds not realized,
 25 High instincts, before which our mortal nature
 Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised !
 But for those first affections,
 Those shadowy recollections,
 Which, be they what they may,
 30 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
 Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
 Uphold us — cherish — and have power to make
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being
 Of the eternal silence; truths that wake
 35 To perish never :

Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
 Nor man nor boy,
 Nor all that is at enmity with joy
 Can utterly abolish or destroy !
 Hence, in a season of calm weather, 5
 Though inland far we be,
 Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
 Which brought us hither,
 Can in a moment travel thither —
 And see the children sport upon the shore, 10
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.”

And since it would be unfair to conclude with an extract,
 which though highly characteristic, must yet from the nature
 of the thoughts and the subjects be interesting, or perhaps
 intelligible, to but a limited number of readers ; I will add 15
 from the poet's last published work a passage equally
 Wordsworthian ; of the beauty of which, and of the imagina-
 tive power displayed therein, there can be but one opinion,
 and one feeling :

“ Fast the church-yard fills ; — anon 20
 Look again and they are gone ;
 The cluster round the porch, and the folk
 Who sate in the shade of the prior's oak !
 And scarcely have they disappeared
 Ere the prelude hymn is heard : 25
 With one consent the people rejoice,
 Filling the church with a lofty voice !
 They sing a service which they feel
 For 'tis the sun-rise of their zeal,
 And faith and hope are in their prime 30
 In great Eliza's golden time.

“ A moment ends the fervent din
 And all is hushed without and within ;

For though the priest more tranquilly
 Recites the holy liturgy,
 The only voice which you can hear
 Is the river murmuring near.
 5 When soft! — the dusky trees between
 And down the path through the open green,
 Where is no living thing to be seen;
 And through yon gateway, where is found,<
 Beneath the arch with ivy bound,
 10 Free entrance to the church-yard ground;
 And right across the verdant sod
 Towards the very house of God;
 Comes gliding in with lovely gleam,
 Comes gliding in serene and slow,
 15 Soft and silent as a dream,
 A solitary doe!
 White she is as lily of June,
 And beauteous as the silver moon
 When out of sight the clouds are driven
 20 And she is left alone in heaven!
 Or like a ship some gentle day
 In sunshine sailing far away —
 A glittering ship that hath the plain
 Of ocean for her own domain.
 * * * * *
 25 What harmonious pensive changes
 Wait upon her as she ranges
 Round and round this pile of state
 Overthrown and desolate!
 Now a step or two her way
 30 Is through space of open day,
 Where the enamoured sunny light
 Brightens her that was so bright:
 Now doth a delicate shadow fall,
 Falls upon her like a breath
 35 From some lofty arch or wall,
 As she passes underneath.”¹

The following analogy will, I am apprehensive, appear dim and fantastic, but in reading Bartram's *Travels* I could not help transcribing the following lines as a sort of allegory, or connected simile and metaphor of Wordsworth's intellect and genius. "The soil is a deep, rich, dark mould, on a deep stratum of tenacious clay; and that on a foundation of rocks, which often break through both strata, lifting their backs above the surface. The trees which chiefly grow here are the gigantic black oak; magnolia grandiflora; fraxinus excelsior; plantane; and a few stately tulip trees." ¹ 10
 What Mr. Wordsworth will produce, it is not for me to prophesy: but I could pronounce with the liveliest convictions what he is capable of producing. It is the FIRST GENUINE PHILOSOPHIC POEM.

The preceding criticism will not, I am aware, avail to 15 overcome the prejudices of those who have made it a business to attack and ridicule Mr. Wordsworth's compositions.

Truth and prudence might be imaged as concentric circles. The poet may perhaps have passed beyond the 20 latter, but he has confined himself far within the bounds of the former, in designating these critics, as too petulant to be passive to a genuine poet, and too feeble to grapple with him; — "men of palsied imaginations, in whose minds all healthy action is languid; — who, therefore, feel as the 25 many direct them, or with the many are greedy after vicious provocatives." ²

Let not Mr. Wordsworth be charged with having expressed himself too indignantly, till the wantonness and the systematic and malignant perseverance of the aggressions 30 have been taken into fair consideration. I myself heard

the commander-in-chief of this unmanly warfare make a boast of his private admiration of Wordsworth's genius. I have heard him declare, that whoever came into his room would probably find the *Lyrical Ballads* lying open on his
5 table, and that (speaking exclusively of those written by Mr. Wordsworth himself) he could nearly repeat the whole of them by heart. But a Review, in order to be a saleable article, must be personal, sharp, and pointed: and, since then, the poet has made himself, and with himself all who
10 were, or were supposed to be, his friends and admirers, the object of the critic's revenge — how? by having spoken of a work so conducted in the terms which it deserved!¹ I once heard a clergyman in boots and buckskin avow, that he would cheat his own father in a horse. A moral system
15 of a similar nature seems to have been adopted by too many anonymous critics. As we used to say at school, in reviewing they make believe being rogues: and he who complains is to be laughed at for his ignorance of the game. With the pen out of their hand they are honourable men. They
20 exert indeed power (which is to that of the injured party who should attempt to expose their glaring perversions and mis-statements, as twenty to one) to write down, and (where the author's circumstances permit) to impoverish the man, whose learning and genius they themselves in private have
25 repeatedly admitted. They knowingly strive to make it impossible for the man even to publish any future work without exposing himself to all the wretchedness of debt and embarrassment.² But this is all in their vocation: and bating what they do in their vocation, “who can say that black is
30 the white of their eye?”

So much for the detractors from Wordsworth's merits.

On the other hand, much as I might wish for their fuller sympathy, I dare not flatter myself, that the freedom with which I have declared my opinions concerning both his theory and his defects, most of which are more or less connected with his theory either as cause or effect, will be satisfactory or pleasing to all the poet's admirers and advocates. More indiscriminate than mine their admiration may be: deeper and more sincere it cannot be.¹ But I have advanced no opinion either for praise or censure, other than as texts introductory to the reasons which compel me to form it. Above all, I was fully convinced that such a criticism was not only wanted; but that, if executed with adequate ability, it must conduce in no mean degree to Mr. Wordsworth's reputation. His fame belongs to another age, and can neither be accelerated nor retarded.² How small the proportion of the defects are to the beauties, I have repeatedly declared; and that no one of them originates in deficiency of poetic genius. Had they been more and greater, I should still, as a friend to his literary character in the present age, consider an analytic display of them as pure gain; if only it removed, as surely to all reflecting minds even the foregoing analysis must have removed, the strange mistake so slightly grounded, yet so widely and industriously propagated, of Mr. Wordsworth's turn for simplicity!³ I am not half as much irritated by hearing his enemies abuse him for vulgarity of style, subject, and conception, as I am disgusted with the gilded side of the same meaning, as displayed by some affected admirers with whom he is, forsooth, "a sweet, simple poet!" and so natural, that little master Charles, and his younger sister, are so charmed with them, that they play at Goody Blake, or at Johnny and Betty Foy.

CHRONOLOGICAL.

1772. Born at Ottery St. Mary, Oct. 21.
1782. Admitted to Christ's Hospital.
1791. Enters Cambridge University.
1793. Enlists in the Light Dragoons.
1794. Returns to Cambridge; meets Southey at Oxford; Pantisocracy hatched; leaves Cambridge and goes to London.
1795. Goes to Bristol; marries Miss Fricker, and settles at Clevedon.
1796. First volume of poems; *The Watchman*.
1797. Removes to Nether Stowey; first meeting with Wordsworth; the *Lyrical Ballads* begun.
1798. *Lyrical Ballads* published; visits Germany with the Wordsworths.
1799. Returns to England; *Morning Post* and *Wallenstein*.
1800. Removes to Greta Hall, Keswick.
1801. Broken health; the "Kendal Black Drop."
1802. Dejection and family discord.
1803. Visits Scotland with the Wordsworths.
1804. Sails for Malta; made secretary to Sir Alexander Ball.
1805. Visits Sicily and Rome.
1806-10. At Coleorton with Wordsworth; lectures on the poets at the Royal Institution, London; at Grasmere; projects the *Friend*.
1811-12. In London; lectures on Shakespeare and Milton.
1813-16. *Remorse* at Drury Lane; lectures at Bristol; goes to Calne; settles at Highgate with the Gillmans; publishes *Christabel*.
1817. *Biographia Literaria* and *Sibylline Leaves*.

- 1818. Lectures in London; meets Thomas Allsop and Keats.
- 1819. Failure of publishers.
- 1820-22. Hackwork.
- 1825. *Aids to Reflection*; Pension.
- 1825-34. Last years at Highgate.

NOTES.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE 2, l. 14. 1. This is a slip of memory not uncommon with Coleridge. The first volume of poems was published in 1796, entitled *Poems on Various Subjects*, by S. T. Coleridge, late of Jesus College, Cambridge.

“Felix curarum, cui non Heleconia cordi
Serta, nec imbelles Parnassi e vertice laurus!
Sed viget ingenium, et magnos accinctus in usus
Fert animus quascunque vices, — non tristia vitæ
Solamur cantu.” — *Stat. Silv.*, Lib. IV., 4.

London: Printed for G. G. and J. Robinsons, and J. Cottle, bookseller, Bristol, 1796.

This volume contained four sonnets by Lamb, signed “C. L.”

L. 21. 2. The treatment of the poems by the reviews and magazines was a damning with faint praise.

L. 31. 3. The *Monthly Magazine* thought the *Religious Musings* reached the “top scale of sublimity,” and it was regarded by the poet’s friends as the masterpiece of the volume.

P. 3, l. 9. 1. In the preface to the third edition, of *Juvenile Poems*, 1803, Coleridge uses this very language, and acknowledges that in many respects the feelings were exaggerated and the expression turgid. He cites both Shakespeare and Milton as illustrations of the same exuberance of feeling in their earlier works. This preface is reprinted in the edition of his poems edited by Derwent and Sara Coleridge, and published by Edward Moxon, 1852.

L. 17. 2. Cf. Preface to the edition of Coleridge's poems, edited by Derwent and Sara Coleridge, 1852, or to the last edition of the poet's works, 1893.

P. 4, l. 4. 1. Cf. *Poems Written in Youth*, in the edition of 1852, or in Vol. I. Aldine edition, edited by T. Ashe.

L. 6. 2. Rev. James Bowyer, head-master of Christ's Hospital. Cf. Lamb's *Recollections of Christ's Hospital* (1813), and *Christ's Hospital Five and Twenty Years Ago* (1820). In a letter to his brother Luke, May 12, 1787, Coleridge writes: "I suppose I shall be a Grecian in about a year. Mr. Bowyer says if I take particular care of my exercises, etc., I shall find myself rewarded sooner than I expected." The "Grecians" were a small band selected by the head-master for special training for the university exhibitions of the school. "Seldom above two or three at a time were inaugurated into that high order." — LAMB.

For a picture of the young charity boy, see Coleridge's *Frost at Midnight*, and Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Book VI., l. 264 *et seq.*

P. 5, l. 25. 1. A theological term meaning "endlessly," or "eternally."

L. 27. 2. "A list of things forbidden" (by the church).

P. 7, l. 10. 1. "Not to be deceived by polish in the sound and the movement of the verse; but to examine carefully what is the basis, what the strength, and what the foundation of the words; whether the figures and the style are purely dressy, or whether they are, so to speak, the natural red and glow, in the cheek, of the blood direct from the heart of the subject-matter itself."

P. 8, l. 14. 1. Cf. Wordsworth's picture of this model child.

"Full early trained to worship seemliness," etc.

— *Prelude*, V., 296 *et seq.*

L. 22. 2. Plin. *Epist.*, Lib. I. "Nor ought it to be any disadvantage to him as an author (literally, 'to his works') that he is a contemporary. If he had flourished in a former age, we should be searching for his writings not only, but also for his pictures. Shall this same man's honor and popularity decline, as it were, from satiety, now that he is in our midst? Surely it is the mark of a mean and envious person not to admire a man signally worthy of admiration because it falls to his lot to see and esteem, not only to praise, but also to love him (the author)." — Miss JOSIE E. DAVIS.

L. 24. 3. A little quarto edition — probably the second, as the first was anonymous — was given to Coleridge by his schoolfellow, Middleton, who had gone to Cambridge the year before.

“As the English romantic poets went forth both to combat the classic school with its super-sense and pride of strict rules, and to endow the poetry of the fairy tale with new life, their first halt was under the shadow of Bowles. Compared with such a poet of the intellect as Pope, who had maintained that, with a clear head and dexterous style, nothing was too prosaic to be converted into poetry, such an elegist as Bowles, who aimed at all effect through the heart, was a most refreshing contrast.” — ALOIS BRANDL, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the English Romantic School*, Chap. I., p. 37.

“One cannot help regretting that the inspiration did not come more directly from Cowper or Burns, or from both; but I confess my inability to join in the expression of amused wonder which has so often greeted Coleridge’s acknowledgment of his obligation to Bowles. . . . The first breath of Nature unsophisticated by classical tradition came to Coleridge from Bowles’s sonnets; and he recognized it at once. Nor was he alone in this experience. Four years later the same sonnets captivated Wordsworth.” — J. DYKES CAMPBELL, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, p. 17.

In a copy of Bowles’s sonnets, which Coleridge presented to Mrs. Thelwall in 1796, is the following: “I entreat your acceptance of this volume which has given me more pleasure, and done my heart more good, than all the other books I ever read, excepting my Bible.”

One should study the poems written by Coleridge in 1790–1793, and compare them with those of Bowles, especially his sonnet *To the River Otter* with Bowles’s *To the River Itchen near Winton*.

P. 9, l. 5. 1. “He was wont to give abundant praise to my mind and my art, and to furnish substantial incentive to my spirit. Not all these associations are swallowed up by the grave! Love still lives, and so does grief! It is not permitted to behold his pleasant face again, but nothing can take away the privilege of remembering and of mourning.” — Petr. *Ep.*, Lib. I., Ep. I.

The occasion of this allusion was the reported death of Dr. Middleton on his way to India. When Coleridge found that the report was unfounded he wrote: “He lives and long may he live: for I dare prophesy, that with his life only, will his exertions for the temporal and spiritual welfare of his fellow-men be limited.” (1817.)

P. 10, l. 10. 1. On these days he would go to the hospital where his brother was studying, and as a result he became as much interested in surgery as he had been in philosophy and poetry. Cf. Gillman, *Life of Coleridge*, pp. 22, 23.

L. 18. 2. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, II., 559-561.

L. 24. 3. The Evans family. Cf. J. Dykes Campbell, *Life of Coleridge*, pp. 11-15.

P. 11, l. 1. 1. When he went to Germany, 1798.

P. 12, l. 31. 1. *Merchant of Venice*, Act II., Sc. VI., 14-19.

P. 13, l. 7. 1. Gray, *The Bard*, II., 2, l. 9-14.

L. 20. 2. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 10, l. 10.

P. 14, l. 4. 1. "In the *Nutricia* of Politian there occurs this line: —

"'Pura coloratas interstrepit unda lapillos.'

"Casting my eye on a University prize-poem, I met this line: —

"'Lactea purpureos interstrepit (unda lapillos).'

"Now look out in the 'Gradus' for *purus*, and you find as the first synonyme, *lacteus*; for *coloratus*, and the first synonyme is *purpureus*. I mention this by way of elucidating one of the most ordinary processes in the *ferrumination* of these centos." — S. T. C.

P. 15, l. 12. 1. The first of these criteria (that *permanent* pleasure is the test of a great work;) no one will question, — the second is still *sub judice*, but the weight of authority is with Coleridge.

P. 16, l. 8. 1. "I remember a ludicrous instance in the poem of a young tradesman: —

"'No more will I endure love's pleasing pain,
Or round my *heart's leg* tie his galling chain.'" — S. T. C.

L. 26. 2. "Cowper's *Task* was published some time before the *Sonnets* of Mr. Bowles; but I was not familiar with it till many years afterwards. The vein of satire which runs through that excellent poem, together with the sombre hue of its religious opinions, would probably, at that time, have prevented its laying any strong hold on my affections. The love of nature seems to have led Thomson to a cheerful religion; and a gloomy religion to have led Cowper to a love of nature. The one would carry his fellow-men along with him into nature; the other flies to nature from

his fellow-men. In chastity of diction however, and the harmony of blank verse, Cowper leaves Thomson unmeasurably below him; yet still I feel the latter to have been the born poet." — S. T. C.

L. 29. 3. Does not the return to nature begin with Ramsay, Thomson, Collins, Gray, and Goldsmith, and reach its first height in Burns and Cowper?

P. 18, l. 3. 1.

SONNET I.

Pensive at eve, on the hard world I mused,
And my poor heart was sad; so at the moon
I gazed and sighed, and sighed: for ah how soon
Eve saddens into night! mine eyes perused
With tearful vacancy the dampy grass
That wept and glittered in the paly ray:
And I did pause me, on my lonely way
And mused me, on the wretched ones that pass
O'er the bleak heath of sorrow. But alas!
Most of myself I thought! when it befel,
That the soothe spirit of the breezy wood
Breathed in mine ear: "All this is very well,
But much of one thing is for no thing good."
Oh my poor heart's inexplicable swell!

SONNET II.

Oh I do love thee, meek Simplicity!
For of thy lays the lulling simpleness
Goes to my heart and soothes each small distress,
Distress though small, yet haply great to me.
'Tis true on Lady Fortune's gentlest pad
I amble on; and yet I know not why
So sad I am! but should a friend and I
Frown, pout and part, then I am very sad.
And then with sonnets and with sympathy
My dreamy bosom's mystic woes I pall;
Now of my false friend plaining plaintively,
Now raving at mankind in general;
But whether sad or fierce, 'tis simple all,
All very simple, meek Simplicity!

SONNET III.

And this reft house is that, the which he built,
 Lamented Jack! and here his malt he piled,
 Cautious in vain! these rats that squeak so wild,
 Squeak not unconscious of their father's guilt.
 Did he not see her gleaming through the glade!
 Belike 'twas she, the maiden all forlorn.
 What though she milked no cow with crumpled horn,
 Yet, aye she haunts the dale where erst she strayed:
 And aye, beside her stalks her amorous knight!
 Still on his thighs their wonted brogues are worn,
 And through those brogues, still tattered and betorn,
 His hindward charms gleam an unearthly white.
 Ah! thus through broken clouds at night's high noon
 Peeps in fair fragments forth the full-orb'd harvest-moon!

Cf. Cottle, *Reminiscences*, p. 162.

CHAPTER II.

P. 19, l. 6. 1. We must bear in mind that Coleridge wrote this in 1816, and that he had then ceased to write poetry. He had just published his poetical compositions from 1793-1816 with the title of *Sibylline Leaves*. The *Edinburgh Review*, under Jeffrey, began in 1802 and was not long in ranging its guns on the *Lyrical Ballads* and the *Prefaces*. The *Monthly Review* in 1798 had delivered its broadside, and *Blackwood's Magazine* had joined in the battle. Crabbe, Keats, Burns, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey, were considered corruptors of the public taste, and met with no quarter.

L. 10. 2. Cf. Wordsworth's "Letter to Lady Beaumont," *Prefaces*, p. 95.

L. 15. 3. A Mediæval Schoolman born at Cordova 1198.

P. 20, l. 6. 1. Cf. *Early Reviews*, Stevenson, p. 9-22.

L. 21. 2. Coleridge alludes to a visit of one of the reviewers to Southey at Keswick. He was treated with every mark of hospitality, and a few months afterwards wrote of his hosts as belonging to a "school of whining and hypochondriacal poets that haunt the Lakes." When asked why he included Coleridge, he said it was because he noticed that his name usually went with those of Wordsworth and Southey. For origin of the term "Lake School," cf. De Quincey, *Literary Reminiscences*, Chap. VII.

L. 29. 3. An illustration of Arnold's *disinterested endeavor* to learn and to propagate the true; his *εὐφροσύνη*, the man of *sweetness and light*.

P. 21, l. 16. 1. Given in London, 1811-12. Cf. J. Dykes Campbell, *Life of Coleridge*.

L. 22. 2. At Bristol, 1814. Cf. J. Dykes Campbell, *Life of Coleridge*.

P. 22, l. 20. 1. "Let each one have the reward he deserves."

L. 26. 2. Cf. Dowden, *Life of Southey*, Chap. VI. Whatever may be the truth in the matter of the relations existing between Southey and Coleridge, we have everywhere evidence that Coleridge was generous in his appreciation of Southey's work.

L. 28. 3. "One is known by the company he keeps."

P. 23, l. 21. 1. *On the Causes of Corrupted Oratory*.

P. 24, l. 26. 1. Cf. Frederick Harrison, *Choice of Books*, Chaps. I., II.

P. 25, l. 12. 1. *Olymp.*, Od. I. "Of many kinds is the greatness of men; but the highest is to be achieved by kings. Look not thou for more than this. May it be thine to walk loftily all thy life, and mine to be the friend of winners in the games, winning honor for my art among Hellenes everywhere." — ERNEST MYERS.

L. 22. 2. Cf. Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at Present Time," in *Essays in Criticism*.

"Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Tennyson, Carlyle, Browning, Whitman — each in his day has stood in the stocks and every fool has been free to throw a cabbage stump or a rotten egg at the convicted culprit." — DOWDEN, *Transcripts and Studies*, p. 242.

P. 26, l. 7. 1. "I have ventured to call it 'unique,' not only because I know no work of the kind in our language (if we except a few chapters of the old translation of Froissart), — none which, uniting the charms of romance and history, keeps the imagination so constantly on the wing, and yet leaves so much for after reflection; but likewise, and chiefly, because it is a compilation which, in the various excellencies of translation, selection, and arrangement, required and proves greater genius in the compiler, as living in the present state of society, than in the original composers." — S. T. C.

L. 11. 2. "That he had considered how important a matter it was to put any work into the hands of the public; nor could he avoid the belief that what he wished to please all men at all times, ought to be frequently discussed."

L. 18. 3. "To spare paper (writings) about to perish."

P. 28, l. 13. 1. "Criticism is a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." — MATTHEW ARNOLD.

L. 15. 2. "We ourselves knew them to be worthless."

P. 29, l. 31. 1. "See the incomparable *Return to Moscow*, and *The Old Woman of Berkeley*." — S. T. C.

P. 32, l. 25. 1. Compare this with the picture of Southey by Sir Henry Taylor in Dowden's, *Life of Southey*, Chap. V.

L. 32. 2. "For many years my opportunities of intercourse with Mr. Southey have been rare and at long intervals, but I dwell with unabated pleasure on the strong and sudden influence which my moral being underwent on my acquaintance with him at Oxford. It is not, however, from grateful recollections only, that I have been impelled thus to leave these my deliberate sentiments on record: but in some sense as a debt of justice to the man whose name has been so often connected with mine for evil to which he is a stranger." — S. T. C.

In June, 1794, Coleridge went to Oxford to visit his old Christ's Hospital schoolfellow, Allen; one of Allen's friends was Robert Southey, whom Coleridge then met for the first time. In one of Southey's letters written during this visit we find the following: "Allen is with us daily, and his friend from Cambridge, Coleridge. . . . He is of most uncommon merit, of the strongest genius, the clearest judgment, the best heart. My friend he already is." At this time the idea of the Pantisocracy was first evolved. Southey in 1836 gave his recollections of the matter to Cottle. Cf. Cottle, *Reminiscences*, pp. 402-407.

CHAPTER III.

P. 35, l. 10. 1. Cf. Knight, *Life of Wordsworth*, Vol. II., p. 329: "The *Preface* was written at the request of Mr. Coleridge." — W. W.

Cf. Henry Crabb Robinson's *Diary*; "April 16, 1815. — In the evening, in my chambers, enjoyed looking over Wordsworth's new edition of his poems. The 'supplement' to his *Preface* I wish he had left unwritten, for it will afford a triumph to his enemies."

P. 36, l. 4. 1. As a proof of the truth of this saying read *Monthly Review*, May, 1799, *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1802, and *Blackwood's*, December, 1818, in Stevenson's *Early Reviews*.

L. 21. 2. "Marked with a white stone."

P. 38, l. 9. 1. Wordsworth, from time to time, had returned the shots of the reviewers; these replies were first published together in the two-volume edition of his poems in 1815. Cf. *Prefaces*, ed. by A. J. George.

"Without, however, the apprehensions attributed to the Pagan reformer of the poetic republic. If we may judge from the preface to the recent collection of his poems, Mr. W. would have answered with Xanthias —

Σὺ δ' οὐκ ἔδεισας τὸν ψόφον τῶν ῥημάτων,
Καὶ τὰς ἀπειλάς; ΞΑΝ. οὐ μὰ Δι', οὐδ' ἐφρόντισα.

And here let me dare hint to the authors of the numerous parodies, and pretended imitations of Mr. Wordsworth's style, that at once to conceal and convey wit and wisdom in the semblance of folly and dulness, as is done in the clowns and fools, nay even in the Dogberry, of our Shakespeare, is doubtless a proof of genius, or at all events, of satiric talent; but that the attempt to ridicule a silly and childish poem, by writing another still sillier and still more childish, can only prove (if it prove anything at all) that the parodist is a still greater blockhead than the original writer, and what is far worse, a malignant coxcomb to boot." — S. T. C.

L. 27. 2. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 256 *et seq.*

X. "Brekekekex, coax, coax!"

Δ. May you perish, and your coax with you; for you are nothing but coax, coax. Confound you! for I don't care.

X. Be assured we will screech as loud as our throats can stand, throughout the livelong day; Brekekekex, coax, coax!

Δ. You shall not beat me in this screeching.

X. Do what you will you cannot beat us.

Δ. You shall never beat me, for I will screech, if need be all the livelong day until I drown your coax.

X. Brekekekex, coax, coax!"

P. 39, l. 2. 1. Cf. Hall Caine, *Coleridge*, Chap. III.

"An admirer of Bowles could not fail to admire these: and hence it befell that three years later, Coleridge found in Wordsworth his best and truest friend. We do not mean to speak disparagingly of Lamb; but Wordsworth had more influence on Coleridge than any other." — T. ASHE, *Introduction to Coleridge's Poetical Works*.

Nothing in the history of Coleridge's critical genius better illustrates

the unerring precision with which he discerned the elements of greatness, where to the ordinary mind there seemed to be only the commonplace.

The *Monthly Review* asked, "must eternal changes be rung on nodding forests, and brooding clouds, and cells, and dells, and dingles?"

Christopher Wordsworth entered the University of Cambridge in 1793, and soon became acquainted with Coleridge. As members of the same literary society they discussed this review of William's poems.

L. 33. 2. Wordsworth's *Poems*, Macmillan, p. 15.

P. 40, l. 3. 1. The fact that the Greek Psyche is the common name for the soul and the butterfly, is thus alluded to:—

"The butterfly the ancient Grecians made
The soul's fair emblem and its only name,
But of the soul, escaped the slavish trade
Of mortal life! For in this earthly frame
Ours is the reptile's lot, much toil, much blame,
Manifold motions making little speed,
And to deform and kill the things whereon we feed." — S. T. C.

L. 13. 2. Wordsworth and Coleridge first met in 1797 at Racedown, where Wordsworth and his sister were then living. Coleridge was at this time living at Nether Stowey. It was a case of love at first sight, and as a result the Wordsworths moved to Alfoxden in order to be near Coleridge. Coleridge wrote to Cottle, "I feel myself a little man by his side." In one of Wordsworth's letters we find, "Coleridge is the only *wonderful* man I ever knew." From this meeting there resulted, not only a most memorable literary friendship, but also a movement in English letters, the effects of which can hardly yet be fully estimated.

"On June 9, 1893, a tablet inscribed 'Here Samuel Taylor Coleridge made his home 1797-1800' was affixed to the cottage. An effort is now being made to obtain funds for the purchase of the cottage, that it may be preserved as a memorial of Coleridge, as Dove Cottage has been secured as a memorial of Wordsworth." — J. DYKES CAMPBELL.

L. 18. 3. The poem to which Coleridge here alludes was *The Ruined Cottage*, now incorporated into the first book of the *Excursion*.

This Stowey period is exceedingly rich and suggestive as we view it across the century. We have many pictures of Coleridge as he appeared at this time, but none is more significant than that given in the verses written by

Thomas Poole, who was filled with enthusiasm for Coleridge's wonderful genius: —

“Hail to thee, Coleridge, youth of various powers!
I love to hear thy soul pour forth the line,
To hear it sing of love and liberty
As if fresh breathing from a hand divine.”

For the history of this poem see Mrs. Henry Sandford, *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, Vol. I., Chap. VII.

For other histories of this period see J. Dykes Campbell, *Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Chaps. III., IV.; S. D. Traill, *Coleridge*, Chap. III.; Wm. Knight, *Life of Wordsworth*, Vol. I., Chap. IX.

P. 41, l. 2. 1. “Mr. Wordsworth, even in his two earliest, *The Evening Walk* and the *Descriptive Sketches*, is more free from this latter defect than most of the young poets, his contemporaries. It may, however, be exemplified, together with the harsh and obscure construction, in which he more often offended, in the following lines: —

“‘Mid stormy vapours ever driving by,
Where ospreys, cormorants, and herons cry;
Where hardly given the hopeless waste to cheer,
Denied the bread of life the foodful ear,
Dwindles the pear on autumn's latest spray,
And *apple sickens* pale in summer's ray;
Ev'n here content has fixed her smiling reign
With independence, child of high disdain.’

“I hope I need not say that I have quoted these lines for no other purpose than to make my meaning fully understood. It is to be regretted that Mr. Wordsworth has not republished these two poems entire.” — S. T. C.

L. 22. 2. “The originality of the Lyrical Ballads consisted not so much in an accurate observation of Nature as in an absolute communion with her, and interpretation of the spirit of her forms. They combine in a remarkable degree ecstasy with reflection, and are marvellously refined both in their perception of the life of Nature and the subtile workings of human affections. Those elusive emotions which flit dimly before ordinary imaginations and then instantly disappear, Wordsworth arrests and embodies; and the remotest shades of feeling and thought, which play on

the vanishing edges of conception, he connects with familiar objects, and brings home to our common contemplations." — E. P. WHITTLE, *Literature and Life*, "Wordsworth."

P. 42, l. 15. 1. *Tam o' Shanter*, 61-62.

L. 25. 2. "*The Friend*, page 76, no. 5" — S. T. C.

P. 43, l. 30. 1. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, A. J. George, ed., p. 45; Leigh Hunt, *What is Poetry*, A. S. Cook, ed., p. 8, l. 8 *et seq.*, Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. II., Chaps. I.-IV.

P. 45, l. 2. 1. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 45, l. 25 *et seq.*

L. 15. 2. "The imagination then I consider either as primary or secondary. The primary imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

"Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word choice. But equally with the ordinary memory, it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association." — S. T. C., *Biographia Literaria*, Chap. XIII.

"Imaging is in itself the very light and life of poetry." — DRYDEN, *Apology*.

Cf. C. C. Everett, *Poetry, Comedy, and Duty*, Chap. I., Imagination.

CHAPTER IV.

P. 48, l. 4. 1. Cf. Dowden, *Southey*, Chap. III.; Wm. Knight, *Life of Wordsworth*, Vol. I., Chap. VIII.; J. Dykes Campbell, *Life of Coleridge*, Chap. VI.

P. 49, l. 5. 1. Cf. *Lyrical Ballads*. E. Dowden, ed.

L. 16. 2. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, pp. 1-33.

P. 50, l. 18. 1. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, introd., p. 10.

P. 51, l. 1. 1. Cf. Whipple, *Essays and Reviews*, Vol. I., "Coleridge as a Philosophical Critic." Symonds, *Essays, Speculative and Suggestive*, "The Province of Criticism."

P. 52, l. 2. 1. Cf. Butcher, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, "Aristotle's Conception of Fine Art and Poetry," p. 253: "The end of the fine arts is to give pleasure, or rational enjoyment." Cf. Shelley, *Defense of Poetry*, p. 11, l. 15-18: "Poetry is ever accompanied with pleasure: all spirits upon which it falls open themselves to receive the wisdom which is mingled with its delight"; Sidney, *Defence of Poesy*, p. 9, l. 12-16: "Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation . . . to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end, — to teach and delight." Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 333-335: —

"To teach — to please — comprise the poet's views,
Or else at once to profit and amuse."

Cf. Ben Jonson, *Observations*, "A poet is not hee which writeth in measure only, but that fayneth and formeth a fable."

L. 30. 2. Mr. Stedman, after citing some "oracles old and new," says: "An elevated view, on the whole, is gained by those who recognize more sensibly the force of Imagination. Here the twin contemplative seers, Wordsworth and Coleridge, lift their torches, dispersing many mists. They saw that poetry is not opposed to prose, of which verse is the true antithesis, but that in spirit and action it is the reverse of science or matter of fact. Imagination is its pole-star, its utterance the echo of man and nature." — *The Nature and Elements of Poetry*, Chap. I., p. 20. Cf. Shelley, *Defense of Poetry*, p. 10, l. 16 *et seq.*: "A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth;" Sidney, *Defence of Poesy*, p. 31, l. 18 — p. 32, l. 7; Newman, *Poetry with Reference to Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 29; Hutton, *Criticisms on Contemporary Thought and Thinkers*, Vol. II., Chap. XIV.; Ben Jonson, *What is a Poet?*

P. 53, l. 27. 1. Cf. Matthew Arnold, *Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoön*: —

"For, ah! so much he has to do;
Be painter and musician too!
.
.
.
Then comes his sorest spell
Of toil — he must life's *movement* tell!"

P. 54, l. 2. 1. "The inspiration ought to be hurried on by its own choice."

L. 10. 2. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 9, l. 22 *et seq.*; Newman, *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 12, l. 16-20: "Nay, sometimes, and not unfrequently in Shakespeare, the introduction of unpoetical matter may be necessary for the sake of relief, or as a vivid expression of recondite conceptions, and, as it were, to make friends with the reader's imagination"; Shelley, *Defense*, p. 9, l. 5-7: "The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error." Professor Butcher says, "It seems that Aristotle was inclined to extend the meaning of the word *poet* to include any prose writer whose work was an 'imitation' (creation) within the artistic sense of the term". Sidney, *Defence*, p. 11, l. 8-25: "Indeed but apparelled, verse being but an ornament and no cause of poetry," etc.

DANIEL, *Musophilus*. "Weaknesse speakes in Prose, but powre in Verse."

P. 55, l. 6. 1. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 13, l. 21 *et seq.*; Prickard, *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry*, p. 63: "Poetry is more serious and more philosophical than History, because it deals with universal truth, not that which lies in details"; Leigh Hunt, *What is a Poet?* "I hate both poetry and wine without body. Look at Shakespeare, Bacon, and Milton. Were these your pure imagination-men?" — LANDOR, *Imaginary Conversations*, Southey and Porson.

L. 12. 2. "Is borne along with loose reins."

CHAPTER V.

P. 57, l. 11. 1. Cf. J. C. Shairp, *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 143: "Most original thinkers have devoted themselves to but a few lines of inquiry. Coleridge's thought may be almost said to have been as wide as life. To apply to himself the word which he first coined, or rather translated from some obscure Byzantian, to express Shakespeare's quality, he was a 'myriad-minded man.'"

"*Ἄνθρωπος μυριαδίωνος*, a phrase which I have borrowed from a Greek monk, who applies it to a Patriarch of Constantinople. I might have said, that I have reclaimed rather than borrowed it; for it seems to belong to Shakespeare *de jure singulari, et ex privilegio naturæ*." — S. T. C.

Cf. Coleridge, *Shakespeare*, "Notes and Lectures" (Lecture I.).

P. 58, l. 22. 1. "A poet is born, not made."

P. 60, l. 17. 1. "Artists considered as searchers after truth are to be divided into three classes, a right, a left, and a central. Those on the right perceive and pursue the good, and leave the evil; those in the centre, the greatest, perceive and pursue the good and evil together, the whole thing as it verily is; those on the left perceive and pursue the evil, and leave the good." — RUSKIN, *Stones of Venice*, Vol. II., Chap. VI.

L. 32. 2. This is but an expansion of Milton's dictum: "poetry is simple, sensuous, passionate." — MILTON, *Essay on Education*; and of Gray's "pure, perspicuous, and musical," in *Letters to Mason*.

Cf. Arnold, *Essays in Criticisms*, "The Study of Poetry": "Critics give themselves great labor to draw out what in the abstract constitutes the character of a high quality of poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples; to take specimens of poetry of the high, the very highest quality, and to say, The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there*." Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, pp. 100–105.

P. 61, l. 23. 1. Shakespeare, Sonnet XXXIII.

P. 62, l. 10. 1. Shakespeare, Sonnet CVII.

L. 18. 2. "The very abundance of illustrations renders my task fruitless."

P. 63, l. 4. 1. "Of the poet of creative powers who speaks the fitting word."

L. 12. 2. *Venus and Adonis*, l. 811.

L. 19. 3. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 15, l. 30 *et seq.*: "Aristotle, I have been told, has said that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing; it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general and operative."

Cf. Aubrey De Vere, *Essays, Literary and Ethical*, p. 10: "Poetry is but the flashing eye, and philosophy the brooding brow, of one and the same contemplative intelligence."

Cf. Leslie Stephens, *Hours in a Library*, Third Series, p. 178: "Under every poetry, it has been said, there lies a philosophy. Rather, it may almost be said, every poetry is philosophy."

Cf. Shelley, *Defense*, p. 9, l. 7 *et seq.*; Arnold, *Essays in Criticism* ("Wordsworth"): "It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life." Symonds, *Essays, Speculative and Suggestive* ("Is Poetry a Criticism of Life?"): "It can be affirmed,

with no dread of opposition, that all art, to be truly great, to be permanent and fresh and satisfying through a hundred generations, to yield the bread and wine of daily sustenance for men and women in successive ages, must be moralized — must be in harmony with those principles of conduct, that tone of feeling, which it is the self-preservative instinct of civilized humanity to strengthen. . . . The world will very willingly let die in poetry what does not contribute to its intellectual strength and moral vigor." Cf. Keats, *Ode to the Poets*. Song is

"Not a senseless, tranced thing,
But divine melodious truth;
Tales and golden histories
Of heaven and its mysteries."

P. 64, l. 30. 1. See Henry Irving, *Individuality*: "If any one of you have great thoughts, or burning passion, you will need to copy no style, or to limit yourself to no method. Your thoughts will find their way to the hearts of others as surely as the upland waters burst their way to the sea. In fine, the greatest of all the lessons that art can teach is this: that truth is supreme and eternal."

P. 65, l. 4. 1. Wordsworth, *Sonnet*: "It is not to be thought of," etc.

CHAPTER VI.

P. 66, l. 8. 1. Cf. Coleridge, *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other English Poets* (edited by T. Ashe, 1883).

P. 67, l. 17. 1. Cf. Keats, *Sleep and Poetry*, l. 181-206: —

"Yes, a schism,
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,
Made great Apollo blush for this his land," etc.

Cf. Campion, *Art of English Poesie*: —

"Goe numbers, boldly passe, stay not for ayde
Of shifting rime, that easie flatterer," etc.

P. 68, l. 8. 1. "Hobbes: *Exam. et Exmend. hod Math.*" "Notice how natural it is for men to pass from the improper use of words to mistakes about things."

L. 21. 2. Hobbes, "Sennertus de Puls: *Differentiâ*." — "In truth there are enough things, — considering the shortness and uncertain course of nature, — to the acquirement of which time must be devoted, without spending it in comprehending language that is obscure and prolix. Ah! what destruction has been wrought by obscure words which have so many meanings that they mean nothing. Let me rather call them clouds, from which, both in matters civil and in matters ecclesiastical, there burst forth whirlwinds and thunderstorms. And in the same manner, I think, Plato is right when he says in the *Gorgias*, 'Whoever knows names, will also know things'; and Epictetus, 'The beginning of education is the careful examination of words'; and Galen writes very wisely, 'The perverted use of words also confuses the knowledge of things.' Excellently, too, Scaliger, in the first book of his *De Plantis*, says, 'It is the first duty of the wise man to observe well, that he may live for himself; it is his next duty to speak well, that he may live for his country.'" — S. WARREN DAVIS.

L. 25. 3. See Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. III., Chap. XVI. ("Modern Landscape"); Harry Goodwin, *Wordsworth and Turner* (*Wordsworthiana*, edited by William Knight, p. 267); S. T. Coleridge, *Miscellanies, Aesthetic and Literary* (edited by T. Ashe, 1885).

P. 69, l. 18. 1. See Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*.

P. 70, l. 8. 1. Coleridge here insists upon a canon which Tennyson was to illustrate. "Tennyson seemed to perceive from the outset that *poetry is an art, and chief of the fine arts: the easiest to dabble in, the hardest in which to reach true excellence*; that it has its technical secrets, its mysterious lowly paths that reach to ærial outlooks, and this no less than sculpture, painting, music, or architecture, but even more." — E. C. STEDMAN, *Victorian Poets*, p. 156.

Cf. Gray's comments upon the *Language of Poetry*, in his letters to Mason.

"Poetrie having bene in all ages, and even amongst the most barbarous, always of singular account and honour, and being indede so worthy and commendable an arte; or rather no arte, but a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to bee gotten by laboure and learning, but adorned with both; and poured into the witte by a certain *Ἐνθούσιασμός* and celestial inspiration." Argument to Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (October).

L. 31. 2. "These thoughts were suggested to me during the perusal of the *Madrigals* of Giovambatista Strozzi, published in Florence, 1593." — S. T. C.

CHAPTER VII.

P. 72, l. 15. 1. "The essays effected what is perhaps as much as the writer on art can fairly hope to accomplish. They placed in striking light that side of the subject which had been too long ignored; they aided in recalling an art which had become conventional and fantastic, into the normal current of English thought and speech." — F. W. MYERS, *Wordsworth*, Chap. IX., p. 110.

Cf. Ernest Rhys, *The Prelude to Poetry*, Introduction, pp. xii, xiii.

L. 18. 2. Cf. Wordsworth, *Preface of 1800*.

P. 73, l. 5. 1. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 1: "I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of those poems. I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure; and, on the other hand, I was well aware, that by those who should dislike them, they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that a greater number have been pleased than I ventured to hope I should please."

Cf. Matthew Arnold, *Memorial Verses*:—

"He too upon a wintry clime
Had fallen" . . .

L. 18. 2. Cf. De Vere, *Essays, chiefly on Poetry*, Vol. I., p. 114: "In his first efforts Wordsworth was doubtless somewhat too much of a radical reformer as regards the abuses which had long corrupted language. His remarks on that subject seemed to assume that the language of common life, which he recommended for poetical purposes, differed little from that of good prose writings, a statement to which there are many exceptions. He did not succeed in *thus* substituting the language of common life for poetic diction; but he did a much better thing. He dug deep into the ore of manly thoughts, and finding there a corresponding tongue, both new and true, he blew away the dry dust of conventionalities and affectations, and replaced a false poetic diction by a genuine one."

L. 31. 3. See *Wordsworthiana*, Knight ed., p. 61; *On Wordsworth's Two Styles*, R. H. Hutton.

P. 74, l. 8. 1. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 3, l. 30; p. 4, l. 10.

P. 75, l. 15. 1. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 4, l. 10-23.

P. 76, l. 5. 1. Cf. F. W. H. Myers, *Wordsworth*, p. 43: "They (the Cumbrian dalesmen) have given an example of substantial comfort strenuously won; of home affections intensified by independent strength; of isolation without ignorance, and of a shrewd simplicity; of an hereditary virtue which needs no support from fanaticism, and to which honor is more than law."

L. 16. 2. *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, Sec. XXXV.

P. 77, l. 25. 1. Cf. Butcher, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, p. 290: "It is the poet's function," says Aristotle, "to relate not what has happened, but what may happen, and what is possible according to the law of probable or necessary sequence. The historian and the poet differ not in writing with or without metre, — for we might put Herodotus into verse, and it would be a history as much in verse as in prose, — but in this, that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen." (*Poet.*, 9. 1–2, 1451a, 37 sqq.) "Imitative art in its highest form, namely poetry, is an expression of the universal element in human life." (*Poet.*, 9. 3, 1451b, 6.)

Cf. Masson, *Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Other Essays*, p. 215: "In any case, *Imagination* is the main word, the main idea. Upon this Shakespeare himself has put his seal:

"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of *imagination* all compact."

In short, poesy is what the Greek language recognized it to be — *ποίησις*, or creation. The antithesis, therefore, is between Poetry and Science — *ποίησις* and *νόησις*." Cf. Plato, *Ion*: "All good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed." Cf. Burns: "'To sowth the tune,' as our Scotch phrase is, over and over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration and raise the bard into the glorious enthusiasm so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch poetry."

P. 79, l. 15. 1. "Michael," *A Pastoral Poem*, l. 42–77.

L. 26. 2. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 4, l. 10–14.

P. 81, l. 2. 1.

"I've measured it from side to side;
'Tis three feet long, and two feet wide."

L. 9. 2. As we review the criticism of the century upon Wordsworth, we find that it reflects this dictum of Coleridge. Cf. Shairp, *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 152: "There is more to be learned about poetry from a few pages of that dissertation [*Biographia Literaria*], confined though it is to a specific kind of poetry, than from all the reviews that have been written in English on poets and their works from Addison to the present hour. At times he finds fault with his practice, and lays his finger on faulty passages and defective poems here and there, in which he traces the influence of false theory; while the true merits of these poems he places, not on mere blind preference or individual taste, but on a solid foundation of principles."

L. 26. 3. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 4, l. 23-31.

P. 84, l. 5. 1. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 5, l. 1-8.

L. 17. 2. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 1, l. 5.

L. 20. 3. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 4, l. 2.

L. 22. 4. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 11, l. 9-12.

Cf. Shairp, *Aspects of Poetry*, p. 349: "Mr. Shadworth Hodgson says, 'Metre is not necessary to poetry, while poetry is necessary to metre.' Again, 'Prose, when it rises into poetry, becomes as nearly musical as language without metre can be; it becomes rhythmical.'"

"Lyric poetry is the exact antithesis to prose. Prose is written speech; lyric poetry is written song." — ERNEST RHYS, *The Prelude to Poetry*, Introduction.

P. 87, l. 4. 1. *Judges*, v. 27.

CHAPTER VIII.

P. 89, l. 13. 1. *The Last of the Flock*, l. 1-10.

P. 90, l. 3. 1. *The Thorn*, VI.

L. 18. 2. Cf. Hutton, *Literary Essays*, Vol. II., p. 82: "There is no poet who gives his theme so perfectly new birth as Wordsworth. He does not discern and revivify the *natural* life which is in it; he creates a new thing altogether, namely, the life of thought, which it has the power to generate in his own brooding imagination."

L. 23. 3. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 11, l. 10-12.

Cf. Butcher, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, p. 246: "Aristotle was inclined to extend the meaning of the word 'poet' to include any prose

writer whose work was an 'imitation' within the artistic meaning of the term."

Cf. Shairp, *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 65: "While the language of prose receives new life and strength by adopting the idioms and phrases used in the present conversation of educated men, that of poetry may go further, and borrow with advantage the language from cottage firesides. Who has ever listened to a peasant father or mother describing the last illness of one of their own children, or speaking of those who were gone, without having heard from their lips words which, for natural and expressive feeling, were the very essence of poetry!"

P. 93, l. 4. 1. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 10, l. 1-10.

L. 18. 2. *On the Death of Mr. Richard West*.

L. 24. 3. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 10, l. 31 *et seq.*

P. 96, l. 7. 1. *Winter's Tale*, Act IV., Sc. iii.

P. 97, l. 14. 1. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 28, l. 23 *et seq.*

P. 98, l. 8. 1. "Wonder of Wonders."

L. 27. 2. Cf. Arnold, *Essays in Criticism* ("Wordsworth"), p. 154: "We are not to suppose that everything is precious which Wordsworth may give us. Wordsworthians are apt to talk as if it must be. They will speak with the same reverence of *The Sailor's Mother*, for example, as of *Lucy Gray*. They do their master harm by such lack of discrimination. *Lucy Gray* is a beautiful success; *The Sailor's Mother* is a failure."

P. 99, l. 3. 1. Cf. Sidney, *Defence of Poesy*, p. 33, l. 16 *et seq.*

Cf. Shelley, *Defense of Poetry*, p. 6, l. 31 *et seq.*

P. 100, l. 12. 1. "Altered from the description of Night-Mair in Remorse:—

" 'Oh, Heaven, 'twas frightful! Now run down and stared at
By hideous shapes that cannot be remembered:
Now seeing nothing and imagining nothing;
But only being afraid—stifled with fear!
While every goodly or familiar form
Had a strange power of spreading terror round me.' "

"N. B. Though Shakespeare has for his own all-justifying purposes introduced the Night-Mare with her own foals, yet mair means a sister, or perhaps a hag."—S. T. C.

P. 101, l. 8. 1. Cf. De Vere, *Essays, chiefly on Poetry*, Vol. I. ("Genius and Passion of Wordsworth").

P. 105, l. 6. 1. Spenser, Book I., can. 2, st. 1, *Faëry Queen*.

L. 15. 2. Book I., can. 5, st. 2, *Faëry Queen*.

P. 107, l. 2. 1. Daniel, *Civil Wars*, Book I., st. 7, 8, 9.

P. 108, l. 11. 1. "As the ingenious gentleman under the influence of the Tragic Muse contrived to dislocate, 'I wish you a good morning, Sir! Thank you, Sir; and I wish you the same,' into two blank-verse heroics: —

"To you a morning good, good Sir! I wish,
You, Sir! I thank: to you the same wish I."

"In those parts of Mr. Wordsworth's works which I have thoroughly studied, I find fewer instances in which this would be practicable than I have met in many poems, where an approximation of prose has been sedulously and on system guarded against. Indeed, excepting the stanzas already quoted from *The Sailor's Mother*, I can recollect but one instance, viz. a short passage of four or five lines in *The Brothers*, that model of English pastoral, which I never yet read with unclouded eye. 'James, pointing to its summit, over which they had all purposed to return together, informed them that he would wait for them there. They parted, and his comrades passed that way some two hours after, but they did not find him at the appointed place, *a circumstance of which they took no heed*: but one of them going by chance into the house, which at this time was James's house, learnt there that nobody had seen him all that day.' The only change which has been made is in the position of the little word 'there' in two instances, the position in the original being clearly such as is not adopted in ordinary conversation. The other words printed in italics were so marked because, though good and genuine English, they are not the phraseology of common conversation either in the word put in apposition, or in the connection by the genitive pronoun. Men in general would have said, 'but that was a circumstance they paid no attention to, or took no notice of,' and the language is, on the theory of the preface, justified only by the narrator's being the Vicar. Yet if any ear could suspect that these sentences were ever printed as metre, on those very words alone could the suspicion have been grounded." — S. T. C.

L. 24. 2. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 21, l. 21 *et seq.*

P. 110, l. 22. 1. Cf. Masson, *Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Other Essays*, Chap. V., "Theories of Poetry."

CHAPTER IX.

P. 115, l. 12. 1. "I had in my mind the striking but untranslatable epithet which the celebrated Mendelssohn applied to the great founder of the Critical Philosophy, '*Der alleszermalmende* Kant,' i.e. the all-be-crushing, or rather the *all-to-nothing-crushing*, Kant. In the facility and force of compound epithets, the German, from the number of its cases and inflections, approaches to the Greek, that language so

" 'Bless'd in the happy marriage of sweet words.'

"It is in the woeful harshness of its sounds alone that the German need shrink from the comparison." — S. T. C.

P. 116, l. 8. 1. Leslie Stephen says, "Coleridge was unique in this, that his criticism was the criticism of love. It is very evident that Coleridge censured Wordsworth's principle as severely as did any of the reviewer but the censure was that of a friend, full of sympathy, which is the secret of insight." — *Hours in a Library*, Vol. III.

Cf. Robertson, *Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 162-163.

L. 14. 2. See *Sammlung einiger Abhandlungen*, von Christian Garve

CHAPTER X.

P. 124, l. 8. 1. Cf. Bagehot, *Literary Studies*, Vol. II., p. 338.

P. 125, l. 6. 1. Cf. note 1, Chap. IX.

L. 15. 2. Cf. De Vere, *Essays, Literary and Ethical*, Chap. X., "Personal Character of Wordsworth's Poetry."

P. 128, l. 3. 1. "Mr. Wordsworth's having judiciously adopted '*concourse wild*' in this passage for '*a wild scene*,' as it stood in the former edition, encourages me to hazard a remark, which I certainly should not have made in the works of a poet less austere in the use of words than he is, to his own great honor. It respects the propriety of the word 'scene,' even in the sentence in which it is retained. Dryden, and he only in his more careless verses, was the first, as far as my researches have discovered, who, for the convenience of rhyme, used this word in the vague sense which has been since too current even in our best writers, and which (unfortunately, I think) is given as its first explanation in Dr. Johnson's

Dictionary, and therefore would be taken by an incautious reader as its proper sense. In Shakespeare and Milton the word is never used without some clear reference, proper or metaphorical to the theatre. Thus Milton: —

“ ‘ Cedar and pine, and fir and branching palm
A sylvan *scene*; and as the ranks ascend
Shade above shade, a woody *theatre*
Of stateliest view.’ ”

“ I object to any extension of its meaning, because the word is already more equivocal than might be wished; inasmuch as in the limited use, which I recommend, it may still signify two different things; namely, the scenery, and the characters and actions presented on the stage during the presence of particular scenes. It can, therefore, be preserved from obscurity only by keeping the original signification full in the mind. Thus Milton again: —

“ ‘ Prepare thee for another scene.’ ” — S. T. C.

L. 7. 2. Cf. Wordsworth, *Prelude*, Book V., pp. 373-388.

L. 8. 3.

“ Which Copland scarce had spoke, but quickly every hill
Upon her verge that stands, the neighboring vallies fill;
Helvillon from his height, it through the mountains threw,
From whom as soon again, the sound Dunbalrase drew,
From whose stone-trophied head, it on the Wendross went,
Which tow’rds the sea again resounded it to Dent.
That Brodwater therewith within her bounds astound,
In sailing to the sea told it to Egremond,
Whose buildings, walks and streets, with echoes loud and long,
Did mightily commend old Copland for her song! ”

— DRAYTON, *Polyolbion*, Song, xxx.

P. 131, l. 27. 1. Cf. Knight, *Wordsworthiana*, p. 324; *Poets who Helped to Form Wordsworth’s Style*, Alfred Ainger.

Cf. Shairp, *Aspects of Poetry*, Chap. V., “ Poetic Style in Modern English Poetry.”

P. 132, l. 6. 1. No poet except Shakespeare is more frequently quoted. See Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*.

CHAPTER XI.

P. 134, l. 3. 1. Cf. Introduction to this volume, p. xxi.

L. 12. 2. Cf. Saintsbury, G., *Essays in Literature*, "Jeffrey"; E. Stevenson, *Early Reviews*; Bagehot, *Literary Studies*, Vol. I., Chap. I., "First Edinburgh Reviewers."

L. 31. 3. Cf. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. I., "Modern Art and Modern Criticism."

P. 135, l. 5. 1. S. T. Coleridge.

P. 139, l. 26. 1. *Excursion*, Book I., pp. 207-220. If any passage in Wordsworth's poetry illustrates the triumph of the poet over the critic it is this.

Cf. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. II., Part III., Chap. XIV., "Of Vital Beauty."

P. 140, l. 24. 1. "Wisdom cannot enter a malicious mind."

P. 141, l. 2. 1. See *Edinburgh Review*, November, 1814.

Cf. L. E. Gates, *Essays of Jeffrey*; Dawson, *Biographical Lectures*, p. 253, "Poetry of Wordsworth."

P. 143, l. 12. 1. Cf. Hazlitt, *Round Table*, Observations on Mr. Wordsworth's poem, *The Excursion*. Church, *Dante, and Other Essays* ("Wordsworth"), p. 215.

CHAPTER XII.

P. 144, l. 17. 1. Cf. Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series, p. 161: "If we are to get Wordsworth recognized by the public and by the world, we must recommend him not in the spirit of a clique, but in the spirit of disinterested lovers of poetry."

P. 145, l. 5. 1. Cf. F. W. Robertson, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 162 ("Wordsworth"): "If you come to Wordsworth in order to find fault and criticise, and discover passages that can be turned into ridicule or parodied, you will find abundant materials for your mood." Sir Henry Taylor says, "Wordsworth seemed to brave the contempt of the children of this world, and to take a pleasure in provoking the scoffs of their blind guides, as one who was resolved that his followers should be a peculiar people."

L. 10. 2. Cf. Dawson, *Biographical Lecture*, p. 252.

P. 147, l. 3. 1. This criticism by Coleridge is happily expressed by Sir Henry Taylor in *A Sicilian Summer*: —

"It fits too close to life's realities,
In truth to Nature missing truth to Art."

If one cares to see how criticism repeats itself, let him read Mr. George Saintsbury's *Corrected Impressions*. He says of Browning: "Even in his heyday, the man (it is surely permissible to use slang of one who used so much) 'jawed' at times; he was not to be depended upon for certainty of taste or touch; he would drop hideous negligences, or more hideous outrages of intention, in the middle of a masterpiece." — P. 102.

Cf. R. H. Hutton, *Wordsworth's Earlier and Later Style* (*Wordsworthiana*), p. 61.

P. 151, l. 24. 1. Mr. Myers, in his *Life of Wordsworth*, p. 100, says: "The sense of humor is apt to be the first grace which is lost under persecution; and much of Wordsworth's heaviness and stiff exposition of common things is to be traced to a feeling, which he could scarcely avoid, that 'all day long he had lifted up his voice to a perverse and gainsaying generation.'"

L. 26. 2. "Most excellently serious and philosophical type" (of art).

P. 152, l. 21. 1. *Excursion*, Book III. l. 50 *et seq.*: —

"Upon a semi-cirque of turf-clad ground," etc.

P. 153, l. 19. 1. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IX., 1100.

L. 30. 2. "Art is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material." Cf. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, p. 144.

P. 154, l. 6. 1. "Wordsworth's characters are of simple grain, all of them fed by the life of Nature, but all religious, spiritual, and free." — R. H. HUTTON, *Literary Essays*, p. 114.

"Wordsworth sought to raise up the lowly and the humble to their proper place, and to teach them that 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God hath perfected praise.' Herein, as it appears to me, Wordsworth stands one of the best exponents of the peculiar features of the Christian faith." — DAWSON, *Biographical Lectures*, p. 261.

When Wordsworth visited Oxford to receive his degree, in 1839, Sir

Henry Taylor was present at the ceremony, and wrote the following: "He was much touched with his reception at Oxford; no such acclamations had been heard excepting on the appearance of the Duke of Wellington. These, however, did not much move him; but when the public orator spoke of him as the poet of humanity, and as having, through the power of love and genius, made us feel as nothing the artificial distinctions which separate the different classes of society, and that 'we have all one human heart,' then he felt he was understood and recognized, and was thankful."

— *Correspondence*, p. 124.

L. 22. 2. Frederick Robertson gives three requisites for appreciating Wordsworth's poetry: first, unworldliness; second, feelings trained and disciplined by the truth of nature; third, delicacy and depth of feeling. — *Lectures and Addresses* (Kegan Paul), p. 152 *et seq.*

"He who comes under the discipline of Wordsworth comes under the discipline of poverty, chastity, and obedience." — MATTHEW ARNOLD, *Wordsworthiana*, p. 124.

P. 155, l. 22. 1. Cf. note to p. 52, l. 2. 1.

L. 23. 2. "An inversion of the logical order."

P. 156, l. 20. 1. Wordsworth, *Excursion*, Book I., p. 77 *et seq.*

P. 157, l. 16. 1. Wordsworth, *Resolution and Independence*, pp. 44-47.

P. 158, l. 5. 1. Cf. Horace, *Art of Poetry*, A. S. Cook, ed.

P. 160, l. 8. 1. Wordsworth, *Excursion*, Book I., 108-124.

L. 12. 2. The *Excursion*, although having many of the faults which Coleridge mentions, has had its "fit audience though few." Hazlitt, who could not be accused of any bias towards Wordsworth, said of it: "The extreme simplicity which some persons have objected to is to be found only in the subject and the style; the sentiments are subtle and profound." — *The Round Table*.

"Even of those disquisitions of the *Excursion* which seem most prosy, there are seldom wanting some of those glances of deeper vision, by which old neglected truths are flashed with new power on the consciousness, or new relations of truth, which had hitherto lain hidden, are for the first time revealed." — SHAIRP, *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, p. 70.

Cf. Sir Henry Taylor's admirable review of *Excursion*, in *Critical Essays*, p. 44.

L. 15. 3. This may be true of certain of the earlier poems, but it does not apply with any force to those now accepted as Wordsworth's masterpieces.

P. 161. l. 8. 1. "It is mistaken criticism, I think, to assert this of any of his poems on Nature, but to his poems on incident this charge is often applicable. Many of the small discords which interrupt the harmony of Wordsworth's poetry are due to the egotism by which a man of moods so solitary, and of genius so decisive was almost necessarily haunted." — R. H. HURTON, *Essays*, Vol. II., p. 98.

"Now it is precisely this audacity of self-reliance, I suspect, which goes far toward making the sublime, and which falling by a hair's-breadth short thereof, makes the ridiculous." — LOWELL, *Essays*, IV., p. 116.

L. 20. 2. These lines from *The Daffodils* were suggested by Mrs. Wordsworth.

This is an illustration of Coleridge's inability to appreciate the "buoyant joy and love" which the daffodils breathed into Wordsworth's simple and healthy nature.

P. 162, l. 21. 1. This criticism is true of many of Wordsworth's poems of incident.

P. 164, l. 10. 1. Coleridge's attempt at humor is a dismal failure. It is hardly in keeping with the spirit of this noble poem.

Cf. H. E. Scudder, *Childhood in Literature and Art*, Chap. VI.

L. 26. 2. "Universal" (Pantheism).

P. 165, l. 15. 1. Here again Coleridge is "in wandering mazes lost." It is an excellent illustration of what Hazlitt called his power to "start from no premises and to come to no conclusion."

P. 166, l. 23. 1. Time has answered Coleridge and has pronounced his criticism of the *Ode* unsound. To many people, perhaps to most, Wordsworth is known chiefly as the author of the *Ode*. It is more often quoted than any other of his poems.

Wisely does Wordsworth rest the question of immortality upon the childlike intuitions rather than upon the dicta of the wise and prudent. The necessity of possessing the child-spirit, in order to enter the kingdom of truth, lies at the root of Wordsworth's philosophy. Emerson says: "I am a better believer, and all serious souls are better believers, in immortality than we can give grounds for. The real evidence is too subtle, or is higher than we can write down in propositions, and therefore Wordsworth's *Ode* is the best modern essay on the subject." Cf. Stopford Brooke, *Theology in the English Poets*, Lecture XIII.

It is somewhat significant that Coleridge's greatest poem, that one in

which childlike humility and simple faith in God's justice and love are supreme, is the poem written directly under Wordsworth's influence. If one wishes to see how far Coleridge drifted from this early poetic passion, let one read his lines addressed to Wordsworth on reading the Prelude. Stopford Brooke says: "They are the cry of one who had a mighty idea, and who, in the shock of its overthrow, was struck with paralysis."

P. 167, l. 16. 1. "His (Wordsworth's) words are themselves thought and feeling; not eloquent, or musical words merely, but that sort of creative language which carries the reality of what it depicts, directly to the consciousness." — WALTER PATER, *Appreciations*, p. 57.

"English literature contains one great, one nearly perfect model of the pure style in the literary expression of typical *sentiment*; Wordsworth, perhaps, comes as near to choice purity of style in sentiment as is possible." — WALTER BAGEHOT, *Literary Studies*, Vol. II., p. 353.

P. 170, l. 30. 1. "Wordsworth is the greatest of the English poets of this century; greatest not only as a poet, but as a philosopher. It is the mingling of profound thought, and of ordered thought, with poetic sensibility and power (the power always the master of the sensibility) which places him in this high position." — STOPFORD BROOKE, *Theology in the English Poets*, Lecture V.

"One lesson, if men must have lessons, Wordsworth conveys more clearly than all, — the supreme importance of contemplation in the conduct of life. Contemplation — impassioned contemplation — that is with Wordsworth the end-in-itself, the perfect end." — WALTER PATER, *Appreciations*, p. 59.

P. 171, l. 5. 1. Coleridge, *To William Wordsworth*.

L. 18. 2. Wordsworth, *Simon Lee*.

P. 173, l. 1. 1.

"And as for Poesie (mother of this force)
That breeds, brings forth, and nourishes this might,
Teaching it in a loose, yet measured course,
With comely motions how to goe upright."

— DANIEL, *Musophilus*.

P. 174, l. 7. 1. Cf. Stopford Brooke, *Theology in the English Poets*, Chap. XIII.; Walter Pater, *Appreciations*, pp. 53-54.

L. 18. 2. Pindar, *Ol.* II., 83 *et seq.*: "I have many swift arrows within the quiver beneath my arm that have meaning for the wise; but for the common herd they need interpreters. The man who knows much by nature is wise; but those who need to learn (those who have learned, as contrasted with those who have innate genius — *poeta nascitur*, etc.), — rash, through wordiness, — chatter idly, like ravens, against the heavenly bird of Zeus." ¹ For this translation and the accompanying note I am indebted to my associate, Mr. S. Warren Davis.

L. 21. 3. "However often repeated, his utterances never seem to become hackneyed. There is nothing unreal or rhetorical in them to spoil; and gold when it is quite pure will not rust." — EDWARD CAIRD, *Literature and Philosophy*, Vol. I., p. 157.

"In his happiest hours, I think his style comes fairly up to what Cicero, in his *Orator*, so aptly notes as the highest grace of oratory, — '*suavitas austera et solida*' ('austere and solid sweetness')." — H. N. HUDSON, *Studies in Wordsworth*, p. 220.

"The right sort of verse to choose from Wordsworth, if we are to seize his most characteristic form of expression, is a line like this from *Michael*: —

"And never lifted up a single stone."

There is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no study of poetic style, strictly so-called, at all; yet it is expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind." — MATTHEW ARNOLD, *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series, p. 158.

L. 29. 4. "Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power." — MATTHEW ARNOLD, *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series, p. 159.

Cf. De Vere, *Essays, chiefly on Poetry*, Vol. II., "Recollections of Wordsworth."

This characteristic is perhaps the most marked of all which Coleridge cites. It is seen in verses like the following: —

¹ Pindar often compares himself to the eagle. Professor Seymour, in his edition of Pindar, quotes Gray's *Progress of Poesy*: —

"Nor the pride nor ample pinion that the *Theban eagle* bear," etc.

"A gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents."

"Singing, singing,
With clouds and sky about thee ringing."

"O listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound."

"Child of loud-throated war! the mountain stream
Roars in thy hearing; but thy hour of rest
Is come, and thou art silent in thy age
Save when the wind sweeps by and sounds are caught
Ambiguous, neither wholly thine nor theirs."

"Those fraternal Four of Borrowdale
Joined in one solemn and capacious grove;
Huge trunks, and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwined fibres serpentine
Up-coiling."

"With a gentle hand
Touch, — for there is a spirit in the woods."

"The very houses seem asleep.
And all that mighty heart is lying still."

P. 175, l. 17. 1. *Prelude*, I., p. 338.

P. 176, l. 17. 1. "Freedom, immortality, and a spiritual God were of the very essence of his own meditative world; he is the poet of all separate *living emanations* from Nature, or from Man, or God." — HUTTON, *Literary Essays*, p. 111.

"Wordsworth's poems are profound illustrations of the 'Humanities.'" — De Vere, *Essays, chiefly on Poetry*, Vol. I., p. 107.

"He sings of God, of Man, of Nature, and, as the result of these three, of Human Life, and they are all linked by thought, and, through feeling, one to another; so that the result is a complete whole which we can study as if it were a world of his own." — S. A. BROOKE, *Theology in the English Poets*, p. 93. "Blessed be William Wordsworth among teachers and rectifiers of the human spirit." — PROF. H. CORSON, *Aims of Literary Study*, p. 12.

P. 178, l. 6. 1. "I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after Shakespeare and Milton, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time."

—MATTHEW ARNOLD, *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series, p. 132.

"If Shakespeare, as I hold, remains absolutely and forever peerless, Wordsworth seems to me to come after Milton." — EDMUND SCHERER, *Essays on English Literature*, p. 225.

L. 11. 2. *Elegiac Stanzas on Seeing Peele Castle in a Storm*, l. 14-16.

P. 182, l. 36. 1. *The White Doe of Rylstone*.

P. 183, l. 10. 1. What a contrast to this Coleridge furnishes! The soil of his nature is even more rich and fertile, but the solid base of rock is lacking: the flora is rich and rare, but tender and twining. D. M. Moir says: "If one (Wordsworth) was iron, the other (Coleridge) was wax, and took each plastic bend of the moment."

L. 27. 2. Wordsworth, *Prefaces*, p. 66, l. 10-13.

P. 184, l. 12. 1. Mr. George Saintsbury thinks that Jeffrey was sincere when he used such phrases as "stuff about dancing daffodils," and he says that "the problem is to discover and define, if possible, the critical standpoint of a man whose judgment was at once so acute and so purblind." — *Essays in English Literature*, "Jeffrey."

L. 28. 2. "Not many months ago an eminent bookseller was asked what he thought of ———? The answer was: 'I have heard his powers very highly spoken of by some of our first-rate men; but I would not have a work of his if any one would give it me: for he is spoken but slightly of, or not at all, in the *Quarterly Review*: and the *Edinburgh*, you know, is decided to cut him up.'" — S. T. C.

Dr. Johnson says: "There is a certain race of men, that either imagine it their duty, or make it their amusement, to hinder the reception of every work of learning or genius, who stand as sentinels in the avenues of fame, and value themselves upon giving Ignorance and Envy the first notice of their prey."

Frederick Robertson, alluding to the two great events in his university career: the recognition by the university of the work of Dr. Arnold on the one hand, and of the work of Wordsworth on the other, says: "When Wordsworth came forward to receive his honorary degree there were young eyes there filled with an emotion of which they had no need to be ashamed, that at last the world had recognized the merit of the man they had loved

so long, and acknowledged as their teacher." — *Lectures and Addresses*, "Wordsworth."

P. 185, l. 8. 1. "Coleridge's criticism was the criticism of love, the criticism of a man who combined the first simple impulse of admiration with the power of explaining why he admired." — LESLIE STEPHEN, *Hours in a Library*, Vol. III., "Coleridge."

Coleridge was savagely attacked for his defence of Wordsworth. Jeffrey sent a broadside from the *Edinburgh*. Hazlitt and the *Blackwood's Magazine* were equally scurrilous.

After such treatment as Jeffrey had given Wordsworth, one is surprised to find that he cared to meet the poet, and yet Sir Henry Taylor says: "Wordsworth met Jeffrey the other day at Sir J. J. Mackintosh's, and at Jeffrey's request they were introduced. Lockhart beheld the ceremony, and told me that Wordsworth played the part of a man of the world to perfection, much better than the smaller man, and did not appear to be conscious of anything having taken place between them before." — *Correspondence*, p. 38.

P. 15. 2. Cf. *To William Wordsworth* by Coleridge.

"The truly great
Have all one age, and from one visible space
Shed influence! They both in power and act,
Are permanent, and Time is not with them
Save as it worketh for them, they in it."

L. 24. 3. "His Muse is a levelling one; hence the unaccountable mixture of seeming simplicity and real abstruseness in the *Lyrical Ballads*. Fools have laughed at, wise men scarcely understand them." — HAZLITT, *Spirit of the Age*, "Mr. Wordsworth."

L. 31. 4. "The commonplace modern criticism on Wordsworth is that he is too transcendental. On the other hand the criticism with which he was first assailed was that he was ridiculously simple." — HUTTON, *Literary Essays*, "Wordsworth and his Genius."

It is interesting to compare the characteristic excellencies of Wordsworth's work, as given in this chapter, with those which Arthur Hallam affirmed of Tennyson: "First, luxuriance of imagination; second, power of embodying himself in ideal characters; third, vivid, picturesque delineation of objects; fourth, variety of verse forms; fifth, the elevated habit

of his thought calculated to create a love of beauty rather than to furnish information." — ARTHUR WAUGH, *Alfred Tennyson*, p. 38.

"To the Wordsworthian, anxious for a full justification of the faith that is in him, the whole body of Coleridge's criticism on his friend's poetry, in the *Biographia Literaria*, may be confidently recommended. The refutation of what is untenable in Wordsworth's theory, the censure pronounced upon certain characteristics of his practice, are made all the more impressive by the tone of cordial admiration which distinguishes every personal reference to the poet himself, and by the unfailing discrimination with which the critic singles out the peculiar beauties of his poetry." — H. D. TRAILL, *Coleridge*, p. 157.

"We cannot believe that he criticiseth best who loveth best all styles both great and small. Surely the best critic is he who, neither ashamed of admiring when he can, nor afraid of reprehending when he might, does not ask the reader to take his admiration or reprehension on trust, but vindicates both, by adducing such reasons as in all ages have sufficed to demonstrate why masterpieces are masterpieces, and why failures are failures." — WILLIAM WATSON, *Excursion in Criticism*.

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